Monday, January 12, 2009 • 18 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 35 P10 www.inquirer.net

GREEN PEACE A golfer walks on the green in the southern area of the Valley Golf and Country Club in Antipolo City, near where a brawl erupted among some players and took media's attention. STORY, P2

Golf club cracks whip, expels De la Paz, suspends Pangandaman

DE LA PAZ

PANGANDAMAN

PANGANDAMAN JR.

By Cedrilf F. Tupas, Nikko Dizon and Erika Sauler

THE "GOLF WAR" ISN'T BY ANY measure over, but the initial inquiry indicated it wasn't a case of arrogance of power, but a display of hubris.

The board of directors of Valley Golf and Country Club over the weekend snubbed the whip on businessman Delfin de la Paz, deciding unanimously after an investigation to expel him as a member for "disorderly conduct in instigating the brawl" a day after Christmas on the rolling course in Antipolo.

De la Paz's children Bambee, 18, and Bino, 14, as dependents of an expelled member, were prohibited from the course. Bino, 14, is a member of the Philippine junior golf team, while Bambee is a golf scholar at University of Cincinnati in the United States.

De la Paz's antagonist, Agusan Rekrta Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, also a club member, was suspended for two years.

Although not directly involved in the melee, Pangandamans was sanctioned for the "disorderly conduct" of his guests—his sons Hussein, 20, and Nasser Junior, 27, who is mayor of Maslo in Lanao del Sur.

The Pangandaman brothers, who beat up the 58-year-old De la Paz and his son, were "banned for life" from the club's premises.

"The board agreed that the statements of the witnesses established that Mr. De la Paz started the aggression by hitting Nasser Pagandaman Jr. with an umbrella," according to the decision by the nine-member body.

"Mr. De la Paz's conduct was

GOLF CLUB, A2

Puno: Keep off judiciary

Kampi solons may back impeachment

By Norman Bordadora, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

CHIEF JUSTICE REYNATO PUNO WANTS POLITICIANS to spare the Supreme Court from partisan manipulation, the court's spokesperson told the INQUIRER yesterday amid reports of a brewing threat to impeach him.

The case of the brown envelope

By Norman Bordadora

A BROWN ENVELOPE THAT businessman Louis Biraogo said he found at the gate of his house in Laguna has provoked a new controversy affecting the Supreme Court and supposedly involving a plot to oust Chief Justice Reynato Puno through

THE CASE, A8

"The court and its magistrates as dispensers of justice should be shielded, if not totally excluded from political maneuverings," lawyer Mibito Marquez said in a text message that he said he sent "in behalf of the Chief Justice."

The threat to remove Puno from his post is reportedly tied to the Supreme Court's alleged nonpromulgation of a decision disqualifying an incumbent House member despite the controversy in mid-2008 of 14 justices. (See related story.)

An impeachment complaint against the Chief Justice could come from the political party of

PUNO: KEEP OFF, A11

PUNO: Spare the Supreme Court from partisan manipulation. AQUIRAY ATTO

Petitioner cites public interest

By Norman Bordadora in Manila and Alex Pal Inquirer Visayas

BUSINESSMAN LOUIS BIRAOgo swears he's in no way connected with any move to unseat Chief Justice Reynato Puno.

"That's far from my reach. That's the game of congressmen and politicians," Biraogo told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"My only concern here is the disqualification of a non-Filipino from Congress," he added, referring to the lawsuit he filed for the removal of Negros Oriental Rep. Jocelyn Limbadelong from her seat in Congress.

Biraogo said he had been filing "public interest cases" since he was a student at the University of the Philippines.

"As a taxpayer who contributes to the public treasury, I have the legal right and personality to question the disbursement of public funds to pay for

PETITIONER, A8

Go on leave, GMA tells prosecutors in drug case

By Christian V. Esguerra and Norman Bordadora

SAYING SHE WAS ALSO A mother "bothered" by the idea of releasing drug pushers out in the streets, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered all justice officials and prosecutors accused of freeing drug suspects in exchange for a bribe to "take a leave of absence."

"Today, I instructed Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to require leave of absence of all officials and prosecutors of the Department of Justice alleged to have received bribes in exchange for the release of suspected drug dealers from senates rich and influential families," she said in a statement.

Ms Arroyo was reacting to allegations that certain justice department officials were bribed into dropping charges against drug suspects, including the so-called "Alabang boys."

The state prosecutors have been accused of dismissing the charges against Richard Brodett, Joseph Tecson and Jorge Joseph after P50 million allegedly changed hands. The officials have denied the allegation.

Gonzalez yesterday said he would ask Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and three other prosecutors to go on leave

GMA: GO ON LEAVE, A17

For Bush, a season of sentimental 'lasts'

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA—THE COUNTDOWN clocks that President George W. Bush's chief of staff distributed 900 days ago are still ticking; his advisers tallied their remaining time last week and calculated fewer than 300 hours to go.

Cardboard cutouts are stacked in the

FOR BUSH, A4

100-day yardstick for Barack Obama

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

ON JAN. 20, THE UNITED STATES inaugurates the administration of Barack Obama, the first black president in its history, in the midst of the most devastating global economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

His inauguration comes under unprecedented historic circumstances: He confronts the recession in the United States is fighting two wars—in Iraq and Afghanistan—with the economy in "dire" shape.

In a landmark speech last week at George Mason University in Virginia on his return to Washington from his holiday in Hawaii, Obama said he and

100-DAY, A4

Read-along stories dwell on change, new beginnings

By Schatzi Quadala Inquirer Research

STORIES ABOUT CHANGE AND new beginnings were the focus of Saturday's Inquirer Read-Along session.

In celebration of the New Year, more than 30 children, listened to stories about a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, a boy coping with the birth of a new brother, a group of mice looking for cheese and a boy transforming a kingdom with laughter.

The read-along held at the Inquirer office in Makati City featured beauty queen/performer Precious Lara Quigaman, 2008 Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Teacher Rowena Villanueva and teachers from Sophia School in Meycauayan, Bulacan.

Quigaman, the fourth Filipino to win the Miss International pageant, read "Starbuger Baby I Was There First" by Paula Danziger and G. Brian Karas, which is about a boy who is jealous of his little brother but eventually learns to like his new sibling.

Quigaman, who studied Media Production and Communications at Pilton College in England, said

READ-ALONG, A17

MISS International Precious Lara Quigaman gestures as she tells a story to young wards of Child Hope. BOBBY ERTOS

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Art bargains in '09? **LIFESTYLE** / C1
War stories contest for HS students **LEARNING** / G1

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
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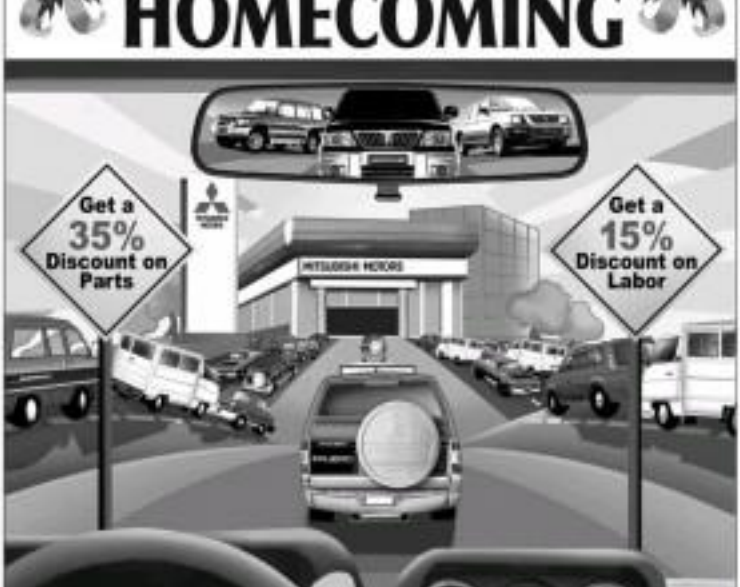
UP professor heads UN advisory body

Carolina Hernandez is first Filipino to lead disarmament, security board

The Pajeros and L200s can now join the Great Mitsubishi Service Plus

HOMECOMING



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FUSO

Mitsubishi Motors Drive to earth

By Gerry Lirio

CAROLINA HERNANDEZ, PROfessor emeritus at the University of the Philippines, has been named chair of the United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters which advises the UN Secretary General on matters involving global security, nuclear arms and energy.

Hernandez, who first joined the UN advisory board in January 2006 at the invitation of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, now heads end of her appointment as chair of the 20-member international advisory committee in a letter dated Dec. 30, 2008, signed by Sergio Duarte, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The 67-year-old Hernandez replaces Polish diplomat Adam Daniel Rotfeld of the Polish Institute of International Affairs. The other members of the international body are diplomats and security experts from United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Russia, China, Israel, Belgium, Brazil, Mexico and Sri Lanka.

Hernandez is its first Filipino member and chair.

She will fly to the US next month to formally accept the appointment and to preside over the body's first meeting for the year on Feb. 16 in New York.

"I feel honored. I am pleased, but at the same time I feel some concerns that I can live up to their expectations," she told the Inquirer.

Most senior member

Rotfeld's letter did not say how Hernandez came to be chosen, but Hernandez theorized that she was probably the most senior member of the body and because of her performance on the board the last two years.

Hernandez was particularly excited about her new posting under the leadership of veteran UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.

She said that when the Korean diplomat succeeded Annan in October 2006, he posed several major reforms regarding peacekeeping and UN employment practices. Ban has also taken particularly strong stands on global warming, pressing the issue repeatedly with US President George W. Bush. In Dafur, he lobbied persuade Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir to allow peacekeeping troops to enter Sudan.

In her first New York meeting as chair of the international disarmament body in February, Hernandez is expected to steer discussions on the continued use of nuclear energy as a result of declining energy resources.

Nuclear energy debate

The board last August had a spirited exchange of views on rising global demand for energy and its impact on international and peace security. Some members had opposed the use of nuclear energy, while others had proposed the peaceful of the controversial energy.

One board member said that as long as energy problems persisted around the world, there would be a "nuclear energy renaissance" not only in the Middle East, but in other regions of the world.

Hernandez said it was a great learning experience and a great opportunity and responsibility in helping develop global peace.

"We have rallied the world's attention to issues linked to disarmament and non-proliferation of arms beyond the weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical warfare, small and light weapons," she said.

Hernandez gained prominence when she helped investigate the December 2000 coup attempt with the Davido Commission, and later the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny as a member of the Feliciano Commission.

She was designated by President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004 as a presidential adviser overseeing military reforms. She quickly resigned after Ms Arroyo appointed former national police chief Hermogenes Ebdane as secretary of national defense, which was opposite the recommendation of the Feliciano Commission in January 2007.

She is going to head the UN advisory body in her private capacity, not as a representative of the Arroyo administration.

Bid out infra projects quickly, Cabinet told

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO has directed the Cabinet to start bidding out over P1 trillion worth of infrastructure projects this month as a way of buttressing the government's "stimulatory plan" against the global economic downturn.

"If they don't bid out the projects, the Department of Budget and Management won't issue our SARO (special allotment release order) to them," said Socorro Ungo-Bautoncello.

The President issued the directive in separate meetings with the secretaries of public works, transportation, agriculture, health and education, among others, Bautoncello said.

"That's what we call team-building of infrastructure projects. This is a classic economic strategy where the government must increase spending if there's a slowdown in the economy," the records, the Cabinet oversight official on infrastructure, told Friday over DBB-TV's "Money Talks."

"This will help stimulate the economy," he added.

The plan hopes to create jobs and stimulate local business while upgrading infrastructure to enhance the competitiveness of the country, officials said.

According to Ibarra, the government can create an about P300 billion in pump-priming funds.

"It's in the budget," Ibarra said in a phone interview when asked how the plan would be funded.

He pointed out that the 2009 national budget was higher than last year's by P146 billion.

Apart from this, there are tax relief measures for both business and individual taxpayers amounting to P40 billion. The cuts slashes the corporate income tax from 35 percent to 30 percent, and increases tax exemptions of individual taxpayers, he said.

Included in the P1.66 billion increase in the 2009 budget, the state fund "sensitive to P200 billion, he said.

On top of this, the government also has an off-budget infrastructure fund of P150 billion to be shared equally by government-owned and -controlled corporations and private banks.

In all, "we have at least P300 billion at our disposal," Ibarra said.

Top RP bank bids for insurer

LOCAL BANKER Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. will team up with Pera-based Global ION group in partners in the insurance business, in bidding for the country's largest unit of state-owned Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co.

As widely expected by the market, Metrobank chief Antonio Abacan Jr. announced that Philippine ION, the existing joint venture with Global ION, would be the acquisition vehicle to run the group wins the Philamlife bid.

"If the price is okay, we have to bring in our partner," Abacan said in a recent interview with the business. "It will be handled by Philippine ION."

He said the partnership would have under a 55:45 percent share structure in favor of Metrobank.

Has the cash

Abacan said Metrobank, which had earlier disclosed its interest in Philamlife and its affiliates, could readily purchase the unit to put the APO group if it wins the bidding.

Since the assets of Philamlife would be booked under Philippine ION under such a scenario, Abacan said winning the bid would not directly boost the total resources of Metrobank.

PhilAm ranks fourth among the country's life insurance firms in terms of assets as of mid-2007, based on data from the Insurance Commission.

PhilAm has the insurance assets of P53 billion, next to Insular Life's P97.2 billion, Sun Life of Canada (Phils.)'s P66.9 billion, and Philamlife's P166.56 billion. It had market share of about 22 percent in 2007.

The Metrobank Group also owns Philippine Charter Insurance Corp., a nonlife insurance operations.

Philamlife had a consolidated net worth of P48.1 billion and assets of more than P778 billion as of mid-2007.

Boris C. Dantes

100-day yardstick for Barack Obama

From page A1

Congress needed to act quickly.

Outlining his plan for US economic recovery, he set the tone for what lies ahead. The incoming administration appeared to be spending all its early political capital showed by his 80-percent approval rating on economic policy in a time of two wars abroad.

"Throughout America's history," Obama said, "there has been some years that simply rolled on over without noise or fanfare. Then there are years that come along once in a generation—the kind that marks a clear break from a troubled past. [and] we are now one of our nation. This is one of those years."

In his mind, "The start 2009 is the midst of a crisis unlike any we have seen in our lifetime, a crisis that has only deepened over the last few weeks."

He cited grim statistics: new data from the US labor department was likely to show the United States has lost more jobs—over 2 million—than at any time since World War II.

"If nothing is done, this recession could linger for years," Obama said. "The unemployment could reach double digits. Our economy could fall 11 million short of its full capacity which translates into more than $2.2,000 in lost income for a family of four.

"We could lose a generation of potential and promise, as more young Americans are forced to forgo dreams of college, of a chance to train for jobs of the future. And our nation could lose the competitive edge that has served as a foundation for our strength and standing in the world," he said.

"In short, what inaction could become dramatically worse."

The presumptive of gloomy outlooks was intended to dampen high expectations of Obama governing an economic miracle to reverse the recession. But the economic data were also the basis of his economic stimulus plan he was expected to unfold on his inauguration.

In RP, no new initiatives

He was offering a program for a future for economic renewal with the cooperation of the Democratic-dominated Congress. He was talking of a road map to economic recovery in the future.

By contrast, on Jan. 19, the Philippine Congress will resume session after the Christmas break, saddled with a legislative agenda that does not offer new initiatives to reignite the economy and that is bogged down by unfinished business from 2008—the national budget for 2009 and the fate of the 20-year-old Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The 2009 budget contains provisions for a fiscal stimulus package to pump-prime the economy with public works projects and job creation schemes to counter the fallout of the global financial crisis.

Congress is also distracted by administration sponsored charter change (Cha-cha) initiatives, ostensibly claimed to amend its economic restrictive provisions.

Despite legislative backing, as well as the constitutional change movements, is not forthcoming. Congress will be looking at the agenda through the reverse end of a telescope.

The Arroyo administration and Congress are not seeking any kind of economic and social renewal.

Rather, they are refocusing the national vision on what they seek to accomplish in the last 18 months of this dying and lame-duck administration with doctrine schemes or pointing to life beyond 2010 through economic fiscal changes.

The legislative agenda of unfinished business is designed to prevent this political end and not respond to the pump-priming and job-creating projects outlined in the 2009 national budget to counter the recession.

US hope for revival

The mood of America as it approaches the inauguration of the Obama administration is full of hope and rhetoric of change.

The political vocabulary is replete with questions over whether the first hundred days of the Obama administration can generate an economic renewal on the scale and with the boldness of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs that set the United States on the road of economic recovery in 1933 following the Great Wall Street Crash of 1929.

Economists do not see in the outlines of Obama's stimulus package programs the boldness of Roosevelt's New Deal.

In his radio address last week, Obama unveiled a program that appeared tame compared with the New Deal.

Obama said his two-year plan to boost the US economy would generate as many as 4 million jobs, higher than his previous estimates, the biggest package of shots in resuscitation, manufacturing and retail.

His plan would also result in the US gross domestic product increasing by 3.7 percent more by the end of 2010 than it would without the stimulus, according a study by Obama's academic advisers.

The study gives a forecast based on a package of spending and tax cuts totaling "slightly over" the $775 billion that has been discussed by his transition team with members of Congress.

Potential recession

Obama has come up under the shadow and standards of the tradition of the 100 days started by Roosevelt.

"FDR took all his successes with the ridiculously archaic 100-day yardstick," said Larry Sabato, professor of politics at University of Virginia.

"FDR inherited in 1933 an economy that by any measure was vastly far worse than the one Obama faces now: an economy bereft after the go-go 1920s, where the sudden shift in the economic and monetary universe rule was marked by the 1929 Wall Street crash and then smothered by protectionist policy blunders that followed. FDR set about to frenetic legislative program in the first three months and the 100-day gadget was born," he said.

"In 1933, the entire American (and world) financial system had all but collapsed; 25 percent were out of work and revolution was in the air," Sabato said. "FDR was the last chance," and he had economical Democratic majorities to push beams."

"Now the times were tough now?" he was asked. "Of course, but not even close to 1933."

Obama cautioned against economic expectations.

"It will not come easy to hope pessimistic, and it is altogether likely that things may be worse before they get better," he said.

Then he passed on the responsibility to Congress. "But that is all the more reason for Congress to act without delay."

The 100 days stand as the perennial memoirs of the Obama bubble. Already criticism has appeared from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, who expressed doubt whether the tax cuts for individuals and businesses would be enough to boost the economy.

For Bush, a season of 'lasts'

From page A1

Vice Wing, as files are carefully arranged for the archives. By Friday the last official workday of the Bush White House, all but the most senior officials will have turned in their government-issued blackberrys and badges.

This is when Bush is calling the season of "the lasts."

But while life inside the White House may be winding down, the legacy-building is gearing up.

The White House website features an extensive archive of Bush's "highlights and accomplishments," including a classroom visit "100 Things American May See From Above; the Bush administration Record." Then on the list: "Kept America Safe."

Bush devoted his last public policy address, which he delivered on Thursday in Philadelphia, to his No Child Left Behind education bill, one of his few bipartisan achievements.

Last flight

On Saturday, there was another last—Bush's last flight aboard Air Force One for a trip to Norfolk for the commissioning of the USS Georges H.W. Bush, an aircraft carrier named for his father.

Bush had to be reminded on Saturday that he was taking his last scheduled trip aboard Air Force One.

After Barack Obama is sworn into office on Jan. 20, Bush will fly Air Force One, the familiar blue-and-white Boeing 747 presidential aircraft, but it won't be called Air Force One because he no longer will be the president.

"I don't think it had dawned on him that it was his last flight on Air Force One," White House spokesman Dana Perino said. "It's a separate one the plane as it is named as the 40-minute flight from Norfolk to Andrews Air Force Base, just outside Washington in suburban Maryland.

After a separate ceremony is, however, Perino quoted the president as saying, "You know, you're right."

After the plane was towed into the hangar, Bush, members of his family and some of his friends boarded a helicopter with the staff of the Presidential Airlift Group....flight attendants, maintenance workers and others who handle everything from food to fuel for Air Force One.

Last family affair

The trip to Norfolk was a quintessential family affair.

"What do you give a guy who has been blessed and has just about everything he has ever needed?" the president asked Dana aboard the Navy's newest ship, "well, an aircraft carrier."

The USS George H.W. Bush, a nine-story vessel longer than three football fields and built at a cost of $6.2 billion, was commissioned on Saturday with its namesake, the 41st president, and other members of the Bush family on hand for the ceremonies at Naval Station Norfolk.

Admiral for the day with red, white and blue bunting, the USS George H.W. Bush is the 10th and final vessel of the Nimitz-class of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, the largest warships in the world.

The ship that bears one dad's name is more than 95,000 tons of aluminum and steel," Bush said from a podium tucked under the flight deck. "She will carry nearly 6,000 of the finest sailors and Marines in the world. She represents the craftsmanship of many skilled builders, and thousands of hours of preparation."

It was the ultimate honor for the elder Bush, a decorated World War II pilot.

A former senator on its hangar bay deck depicts the former president as a youthful, smiling pilot in flight suit. On an upper deck, a "Welcome home" presents Bush at home his days in the Navy to his four years in the White House.

No other former president has visited a carrier named after him. Ronald Reagan was the first living ex-president to have a carrier named in his honor, but he was dead when the ship was christened by his (Sic). Report by from New York Times News Service and AP

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Masbate gov hurt in ambush by suspected NPAs

By Ephraim Aguilar and Jonas Soltes,
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—SUSPECTED COMMUNIST rebels ambushed and wounded Masbate Gov. Elias Kho at 11:30 a.m. yesterday in Cataingan town.

Masbate Police Director Teodoro Medina said Kho and his convoy were traversing the national road toward Masbate City when members of the New People's Army (NPA) detonated two explosive devices along the road in Barangay Cabil.

Medina said Kho was wounded in the eyebrows as glass shards from his car's windshield hit his face. Her security escorts were unharmed.

Medina said Kho proceeded to the Danilo Cortel Cabahug Beach in Cataingan after the ambush.

Masbate police and Army troopers from the 9th Infantry Batallion immediately launched a pursuit operations to capture the perpetrators.

Medina said the rebels were reported to base fled to the upland villages of San Rafael and Cabahoroy, both in Cataingan.

Samar police alerted

Checkpoints were set up at the town boundary while the Samar provincial police were alerted to the possible withdrawal of the rebels to that province, which is across from Masbate Island.

The Khos are a well-known political family in the province. Kho replaced her husband, Rep. Antonio Kho, as governor in 2007. Son Wilton is the youngest mayor of Cataingan town, having been elected at the age of 21.

The family defeated another political clan in Masbate, the Espinosas.

Masbate is one of the hotbeds of communist insurgency in the Bicol region, which will be the venue of joint Philippine and United States military exercises, called Balikatan, in April. (See related story on Page A)

Birthday celebration

Two days before the ambush, Kho joined in the celebration of her husband's birthday which was highlighted by the disinfestation of 58 cows in farmers.

Sandra Gem, former police drug user and admitted "pasiyang" bagsakan along with former three-star-boc Chavit Singson and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) Chair Efraim Genuino reportedly attended the party.

Ako Bikol, a nongovernment organization chaired by property developer Elizalde Co, spearheaded the giving away of the cows at Khalifa Beach together with local government officials. Recipients included rice farmers from each of the 20 municipalities and one city of Masbate.

Balikatan link

Rep. Teresa Lim of Albay's 2nd district condemned the clay-try but dismissed speculation it was meant to protest the coming Balikatan exercises on the island.

Lim says one of the officials who announced the holding of the joint RP-US military games in Bicol is a great conference last week.

Masbate is the second poorest province in the country with about 58 percent of its residents living below the poverty line.

The island has long been known for rough and often violent politics. Masbate was the only province placed under Commission on Elections control in the Bicol region during the 2007 elections.

Placer attack

Communist rebels in Masbate exploded a roadside bomb and instigated firefights with government soldiers when President Macapagal-Arroyo and her Cabinet held a cabinet meeting in Placer, another town in Masbate, to assess the damage caused by severe Typhoon "Frank."

No one was hurt in the blast, which police suspect was caused by a land mine.

A fourth-class municipality, Placer is a known hotbed of insurgency.

Also a Christmas holiday ceasefire, the 3IW leadership has reportedly ordered its fighters to step up attacks on government forces. Recently, a land mine was reportedly used to ambush a police car in Rizal province, the eastern flank of Metro Manila.

Anabel Bosch, rocker, writer; 32

ROCK SINGER AND POET ANA ISABEL "Anabel" Ramores Bosch died yesterday at the Makati Medical Center. She was 32.

Anabel, lyricist and lead singer of bands such as Elevatedsoul, Tropical Depression and Analog, passed away at 4:21 a.m., 11 days after suffering a cerebral aneurism.

Her remains were cremated yesterday evening and her ashes brought to the family compound in Pasay City where they will stay until Jan. 25, which would have been her 33rd birthday.

She is survived by her daughter Mishka, her father Antonio, mother Evelyn, siblings Gianne, Marlen and Emilee, and nieces and nephew.

Panlilio, Padaca, Robredo eye run for national posts in 2010

By Tarra Quismundo, Gemma Lucot and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.
Inquirer Mindanao

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Isabela Gov. Maria Grace Padaca, Sharmaine Gov. Eddie Panlilio and Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo have confirmed that they are open to running for national positions in the 2010 elections.

The three officials made the decision after their group, Kaya Natin!, concluded an assembly or convention and planning session yesterday at the Clark Freeport, said Harvey Keh, executive director of the movement.

Rep. Neptali Bonoan, founder of Kaya Natin!, said the movement supports good governance and ethical leadership. Padaca, Panlilio and Robredo are its founding members together with Bohol Rep. Erico Aumentado, Mayor Nash Lozada of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, and Baguio Gen. Teodoro Bagtalon Jr.

"All three are open as reform candidates," Keh said.

Bonoan, in phone interviews, said Padaca and the prospect of erasing for a national post remained open.

"The fact that I will go through a decision-making process means I can go either way," she said.

If God wills it

Panlilio, in a phone interview, yesterday said: "If God wills it. He knows if he puts me in a national office... [that] I'm not preventing myself."

In a forum by Go Intellinet City on Saturday, Panlilio said exposure he was considering increasing his national office.

"It is not only the moral and political scandals I can participate in," he said.

He, however, reiterated he would prefer to go back to his duties as a priest and, if possible, be assigned to his hometown of Manila, Pangasinan, and retire there.

Robredo, for his part, said vying for a national position was an "option we should consider in pursuing the goals of Kaya Natin!"

First time

This was the first time the three officials came out with a position on their political plans for 2010.

Lozada said his colleagues would first endorse their plans of action to the leading servant constituencies with their constituencies and inform groups.

Keh said that in the case of Panlilio, a Catholic priest on leave, "he intends to undergo [a retreat] and command discernment."

PANLILIO

PADACA

ROBREDO

Panlilio was pushed by concerned Kapampangans to run for governor and in 2007 to challenge friend member Liza Puruda and ex-electrician Ton Meh Lapid.

Recall petition

Last year, however, a recall petition filed against Panlilio, citing loss of confidence in his leadership, forced key allies also to signed from his administration.

Padaca, who belonged to the political dynasty in Isabela, and Robredo are recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, considered the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

LP Senate ticket

On Saturday, former Sen. Franklin Drilon announced that the Liberal Party was considering Padaca and Robredo for its 2010 senatorial slate.

Drilon said the two officials were considering eight politicians being considered for the LP ticket, which would have Sen. Manuel Roxas as its presidential candidate.

The other candidates are former Education Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad Jr., Marikina Rep. Romeo Candazo, Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tanada III, former Rep. Neptali Bonoan and former solicitor Gen. Quiñosa.

Drilon said the party had officially nominated Roxas to be its standard bearer for the 2010 elections even if Roxas remained coy about his political plans.

He also said that the Supreme Court would play a critical role in shaping the results leading to the presidential elections next year.

Charter change

He said the public would see "in the next 18 months the critical role the Supreme Court will play in the political history of our country."

Drilon, who had served as justice secretary for about five years, said that among the issues before the high court would be reinforcing the checks and balances that were the focus of Charter change and the eligibility of former Pres. Joseph Estrada to run for a presidential seat.

He said he was also concerned that the high court would be shortchanged by appointees of President Macapagal-Arroyo, as seven justices are set to retire this year. With a report from Jerome Aning, Inquirer Central Luzon

Comelec mulls P1-M bond to weed out nuisance bets

By Jerome Aning and Kristine L. Alave

THE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION ON Elections (Comelec) has proposed a new regulation that would require all those running for national positions in 2010 to post a P1 million bond when they file their certificates of candidacies.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo said the measure is intended to stop "nuisance" candidates from running for the presidential, vice presidential and senatorial elections.

"They put up a bond. If they don't get two percent of the votes cast, the bond is forfeited. Comelec is tweaking for the design of the ballots to include them. P1 million is not unreasonable," Melo told reporters in a recent interview.

Melo clarified that the Comelec en banc has not yet discussed the idea. He added that he would also have to consult with the election body's legal department on whether or not the bond requirement would violate the law.

The chair said he was aware that some quarters would see the fee proposal as it would prevent the poor from with money could run for elective office.

Under the Omnibus Election Code, the nomination may—and is twice upon the petition of an interested party—refuse to give due course to or cancel a certificate of candidacy (COC) if the candidate is shown to have placed the election process in disorder or disrupted, caused confusion among the voters by the similarity of the names of the registered candidates, or by other circumstances or acts "which clearly demonstrate that the candidate has no bona fide intention to run... and thus, proves a faithful determination of the true will of the electorate."

Melo said that one of the main questions asked of candidates running for national positions is if they can afford to run a national campaign.

Low-cost solution

On flying voters, Melo said the Comelec could not afford the machines that would cross-check the entries on the national voters' registry.

The Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) is "too expensive," he said.

"To prevent people from voting several times, the secret is to dip their fingers in indelible ink, which we can do" he said.

Melo said the Comelec would execute the indelible ink tests of "good quality" ordered to be used by the Supreme Court.

The Comelec estimates there will be some 48 million Filipinos eligible to vote in 2010, when the country elects a new president.

Ahead of the last elections in 2007, the Comelec deleted about 2 million names from its voters' list.

Rude Briton barred from RP

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) has placed on "arrested" Briton on its Blacklist for bad-mouthing immigration officers at Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) in Angeles City.

In a statement, Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said he issued an order barring Barry John Foster from the Philippines after the Briton exhibited disrespectful behavior towards immigration officers when he arrived in the country on Dec. 14 last year.

"Foreign tourists should not malign our immigration officers because their stays and stay in the Philippines are not a right but a mere privilege," said Libanan.

In his report to the BI chief, DMIA immigration supervisor Rey Alfred Hernandez narrated that Foster had lined up in the queue and later cursed arriving Filipinos and were told by immigration officers he was in the wrong line.

The immigration officers had "politely" asked Foster to move to the lane for arriving foreigners but the Briton refused, insisting he be cleared in the line he was in, according to the report.

Foster then uttered his curse and in an arrogant manner asked if the matter was all about money, which drew the attention of the other passengers, the report said.

Invited to the airport immigration office, Foster continued to insist he should be cleared in the line he was in, boasting that he was a frequent visitor to the Philippines.

Hernandez said Foster only calmed down after he was reminded he was a tourist who could be banned from the country indefinitely.

Foster's passport was then stamped and he was allowed to enter the country.

But after receiving his passport, Foster approached the immigration officers and called them "assholes" before hurriedly exiting the arrival area.

The BI order would bar the Briton from the country if he tries to enter it again. Jerome Aning

Correction

IN THE JAN. 11 ISSUE, A METRO HEADline and article on Hyp ALB—"Bishop Bolong" dance is Jan. 14 festival highlight"—announced the date when Manila's festival would be held. The festival will be held on Jan. 17—not Jan. 14.

Airplane lands short of Boracay runway; 26 hurt

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

KALIBO CITY—TWENTY-SIX PASSENGERS were injured when a 72-seat Asti Air plane bound for the resort island of Boracay accidentally hit the runway and smashed into a concrete wall at the Caticlan airport in Malay, Aklan, yesterday morning.

The passenger airbench fractured collarbone while the rest suffered minor injuries.

The incident forced the closure of the airport for more than five hours, causing departure delays from Boracay as well as the Manila domestic airport. Some flights had to be diverted to Kalibo and Cebu.

Insp. Tony Tumaneng, police chief of Malay town, identified the badly injured passenger as Beatrice Simeon, 83, who suffered broken bones and a cut on her head. She was taken to the Aklan Baptist Hospital in Caticlan along with the other injured.

According to Tumaneng, the injured included seven of the passengers and three airport personnel who were hit by debris when the plane crashed against the concrete perimeter fence.

Zest Air director Arturo Alejandrino said the plane left Manila around 6:10 a.m. carrying 71 passengers—including two children—and five crewmembers.

Almost hit the terminal

Tim Kiernan, two German and a Canadian tourist were among the Boracay-bound passengers.

A report by the Air Transportation Office (ATO) in Caticlan said the turboprop plane, piloted by Capt. Vicente Cano, undershot the runway when it landed at 6:58 a.m.

"The plane swerved sharply to the left when it touched down and hit the concrete barrier, seriously damaging its nose. The plane's landing gear and propellers also suffered major damage.

A Canadian passenger quoted by Agence France-Presse said the plane landed on the grass well short of the runway. Its left wing had pierced into a shrub, preventing the plane from hitting the airport terminal. An AFP photographer on the scene said the plane smashed turboat into an airport wall, narrowly missing the airport restaurant.

Windshear accident

In Manila, Ocampo Buenaga, media affairs chief of the Manila International Airport Authority, said the plane apparently "swerved after being hit by strong winds," described in aviation terms as "windshear."

The Caticlan airport was closed because the plane blocked the 30-meter wide and 900-m long runway.

All incoming flights were diverted to the airport for regional terminal Kalibo or Cebu until the Caticlan airport was reopened at around 12:30 p.m. With a report by Jerome Aning

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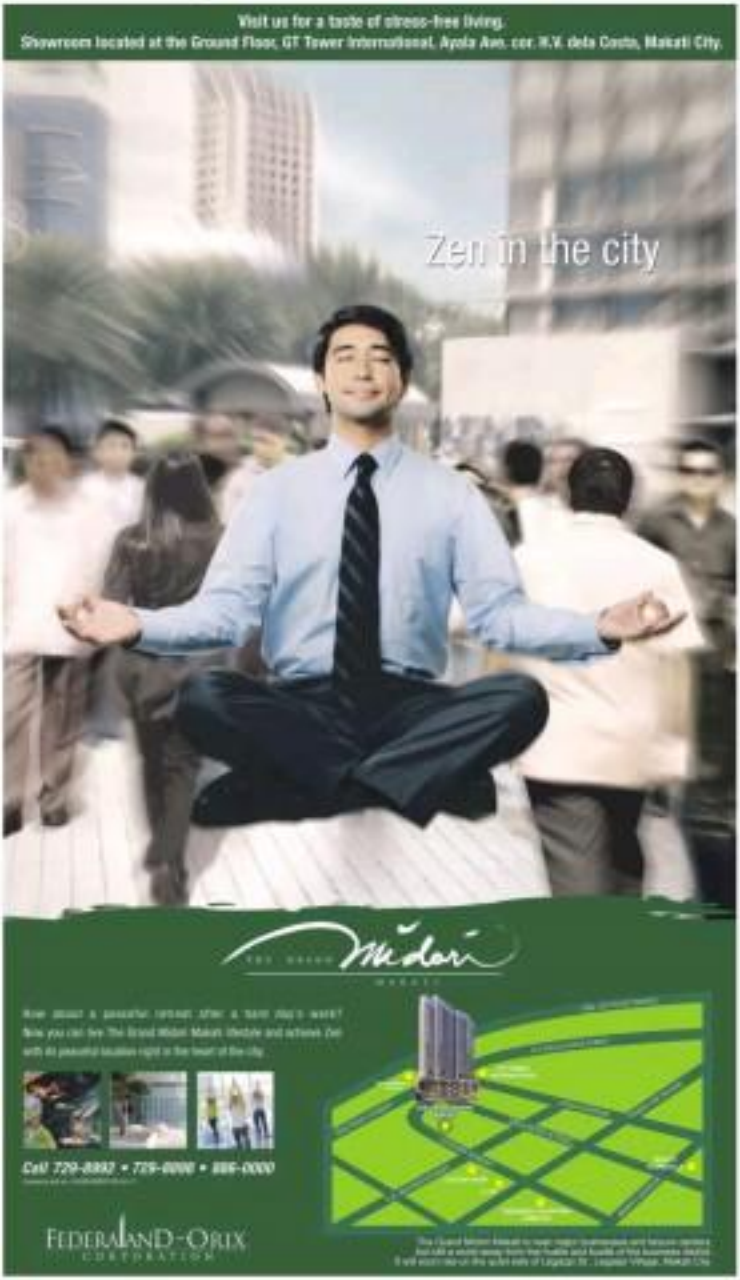

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 12, 2009
1st Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 1:1-6
Gospel: Mk 1:14-20

After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and began preaching the Good News of God. He said, "The time has come; the kingdom of God is at hand. Change your ways and believe the Good News."

As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." At once, they left their nets and followed him. Jesus went a little further and saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they were in their boat mending their nets. Immediately Jesus called them and they followed him, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men.

Commentary:

Today we begin the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year. The term, Ordinary Time, can be misleading. In the context of the liturgical year the term ordinary does not mean usual or average. Ordinary Time occurs outside of other liturgical time periods. It is that time in the liturgical year that lies outside the seasons of Lent-to-Easter and Advent-to-Christmas. In Ordinary Time, the Church celebrates the mystery of Christ in all His aspects. The readings during the liturgies of Ordinary Time help to instruct us on how to live out our Christian faith in our daily lives.

Since Ordinary Time does not need to be ordinary, it is not meant to mean that somehow we get a break from the Liturgical Year. The opposite is true: everything that does not fit into Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter is celebrated during Ordinary Time. But, it is easy enough to go through Ordinary Time, unaware of the wonders it holds. Just as when we wake up in the morning, we often forget to thank God for the gift of our life, for the people we love and the countless blessings He sends us, it is easy to miss the little things that matter.

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The case of the brown envelope

From page A1

Binnigan said the envelope came from "a concerned employee" of the court and contained a copy of an unpublished decision by the high court nullifying the 2007 proclamation of Negros Oriental Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong.

Limkaichong's poll victory was disputed by her defeated rival, Olivia Paras, who is the wife of former Rep. Jacinto "Jing" Paras, core questions about Limkaichong's citizenship; Limkaichong's disqualification may pave the way for special elections.

The Parases belong to President Maningning Arroyo's Kampi (Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino) party.

Binnigan is now under fire from the high court, which has ordered him to explain how he got hold of the that has yet to be promulgated ruling and why he should not be cited for contempt for distributing copies of it to the media.

Binnigan, who claims he does not know who the "concerned employee" is, yesterday said he had not done anything wrong. It was Binnigan who filed a taxpayers' suit against Limkaichong's right to sit in Congress.

The businessman has raised a fuss by saying that the brown envelope he received in October last year contained a letter from the employee claiming that Puno—a nominee in the Chief Justice's stuff "clandestinely" leaked the unpublished decision to Limkaichong, scribbling the letter in the a "behest" notation seeking to overturn what would have been the court's adverse ruling.

Marquez denial

Midas Marquez, Supreme Court spokesperson and Puno's chief of staff, vehemently denied the unpromulgated decision was leaked from Puno's office.

"Not true at all. As other falsehood, I have allegation unsupported by evidence," Marquez told the Inquirer. "Why tell the Chief Justice do that? What's his motive?"

Marquez said Binnigan's allegations and actions were now the subject of contempt proceedings.

"That's on the agenda of the en banc session on Tuesday," he said in a telephone interview.

All except Puno

The high court decision, penned by Justice Ruben Reyes, was reportedly agreed by 14 of the court's 15 justices. It sustained an earlier ruling by the Commission on Elections nullifying Limkaichong's victory after questions were raised over the citizenship of Limkaichong, whose father was a Chinese.

The Comelec later delivered the citizenship issue to the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal.

Contacted by the Inquirer, Limkaichong said she was in a "serving position" on the case.

"I was born nine days after my father was proclaimed a Filipino citizen, therefore I am a natural-born Filipino citizen," she said in a text message.

In his reply on Dec. 23 to the high court's order for him to explain, Binnigan said it was only Paras who did not sign the decision against Limkaichong, although he concurred with it.

"I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of the letter because it contains information which only an author in the court would possibly know," Binnigan said to an e-mail to the Inquirer.

"The information includes the names of lawyers who went to see some justices regarding the Limkaichong case, and the procedures involved when a case gets decided by the court."

"However, since the letter is accompanied by a genuine copy of the decision signed by 14 associate justices of the Supreme Court, it must be genuine, too," Binnigan added.

'Unsettling, disturbing'

Binnigan, in his reply to the Supreme Court, said the anonymous letter-writer also said that Justice Reyes' draft decision was circulated among the justices for their concurrence or dissent as early as June 2008, and, by the following month, had been signed by the other justices.

He found the alleged subsequent leak very unsettling and disturbing mainly because ... a delay in the promulgation of the decision penned by Justice Reyes may render the ruling of the Supreme Court either moot and academic or at least a hollow victory inasmuch as the term of [a House member ends] just a year and a half," he said.

Binnigan said he filed the petition against Limkaichong to keep a non-Filipino from holding office as a member of Congress.

He said his previous "crusade" against irregularities made him—as the administration of then-University of the Philippines president Edgardo Angara in 1986 for "unprecedented increases in salaries and other school fees."

Binnigan said he was also one of those who questioned the constitutionality of the 1995 "mega-election" law.

SC explains

In a resolution last month, the Supreme Court explained why Reyes' ruling was not promulgated despite the concurrence of all the justices, including Puno, who resigned as its head several days after he penned the ruling.

It pointed out that seven justices concurred only "in the result," and that later, on the same day, two other justices told Puno they would concur also only "in the result."

While Puno got 15 justices concurring only in the result, the ruling penned by Reyes "has no doctrinal value," according to the high court.

Thus, "the justices unanimously decided to withhold the promulgation of the ponencia of Justice Reyes," the high court said.

Fraternity brothers

Binnigan said Puno should have also inhibited himself from the case, claiming that the Chief Justice and UP College of Law dean Merlin Magallona, who had assigned the case for Limkaichong, are fraternity brothers in Alpha Phi Beta.

He said that Assistant Solicitor General Perene Fiamora, who he said also sided with Limkaichong in the case, was also a member of the said fraternity.

"I was exercising the my constitutional rights of free speech and freedom of expression. I had no intention to maligne the Supreme Court as an institution," Binnigan said.

Binnigan continued: "Having a fraternity brother as counsel for a party has never been a ground for inhibition. Atty. Agabin has been counsel in numerous cases before the Supreme Court, including Erap [Estrada] cases."

"Does this create the Chief Justice and Assistant Solicitor General [Fiamora] should have also inhibited," he added. With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

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Inquirer
Dare to think. Dare not forget.

Petitioner cites public interest

From page A1

the salary and financial benefits of an elected Rep. Limkaichong," he said.

"That is why I filed a petition in the Supreme Court for the purpose of enjoining the payment of public funds for the salary of an alien," he added.

Binnigan admitted he is a fraternity brother of former Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto "Jing" Paras, husband of Olivia Paras—the candidate who ran against Limkaichong in the 2007 congressional elections.

Paras 'only coincidental'

Binnigan said Paras are members of the Epsilon Sigma Phi Inanoi in the University of the Philippines.

"That is not the reason ... it doesn't follow. He [said in my absence]. It's only coincidental that [Paras] is somehow involved, [Binnigan said].

Jing Paras also distanced himself from any move to impeach Puno.

"Have you known a boy guy? Do just a small guy. This is a fight between David and Goliath," Paras said when reached by phone.

He said that the Supreme Court had affirmed that the decision of 14 justices is disqualify Limkaichong was authentic, "so the issues now is to still the attention of the Supreme Court to promulgate the decision."

Paras claimed he was not in a position to say anything conclusive, "there are certain technicalities that irregularities happened in the non-promulgation." He did not elaborate.

He also said, "We've only after the vindication, that there should be no Chinese citizen sitting in Congress."

SC integrity

Asked if he will would take over Limkaichong's seat if the Supreme ruling were promulgated, Paras said: "There may be special elections. It's a group area."

Limkaichong, in a separate interview, expressed her confidence in the Supreme Court's integrity.

She said the high court's decision not to promulgate a ruling has been penned by Justice Ruben Reyes was not just the Chief Justice's alone but a decision made by the court as a whole.

Limkaichong branded as "shady" the methods supposedly employed by her opponents to get a copy of Reyes' ruling.

"Why are they reading the decision? Let's just wait for the Supreme Court to come up with the final decision," she said.

Limkaichong won by 7,796 votes over Olivia Paras in the 2007 election.

The Paras camp had sought to disqualify Limkaichong from being a candidate over questions about her not being supposedly a natural born Filipino.

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Golf club cracks whip, expels De la Paz, suspends Pangandaman

From page A1

the procedure cases and the spark of the fighting that ensued whereas Hassan and Mohammad Hussein Pangandaman confronted against Mr. De la Paz," it said.

The two parties have filed complaints against each other in the prosecutor's office of Antipolo for child abuse and physical injuries in connection with the Dec. 26 incident.

But soon, before the De la Paz family went on the golf course, an e-mail had been circulated by Bambot recounting how the Muslims came in violation of "Proposed 101" had overtaken the family's flight on Hole No. 3 without permission and, along with a sibling, went on to beat up her father and brother.

The cyberspace narrative insinuating abuse of power by a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Cabinet has sparked calls for the resignation of Secretary Pangandaman and critical media comments against him.

Trial by publicity

The Pangandamans claimed in their statement that the issues, although in armed form, had preempted actual cases simply catching up with the group, that permission had been sought from the marshal and then De la Paz had been informed.

In spite of this, the Pangandamans said the De la Paz flight lived golf balls in their direction on the fairway without shouting "fore," unchanging an 8-year-old child in dark jersey and requiring the brand on a tee and in the clubhouse.

Other members of the De la Paz family—as-

pretedly the wife armed with a knife and a lady person carrying a baseball bat—allegedly joined in the fray that also involved armed bodyguards of the Pangandamans.

"If not for the timely intervention of the club's security personnel and officers and other persons, the situation may have resulted in further violence and injuries," the board said in its ruling.

Pangandaman Senior said the club ruling was "a fair decision."

"It confirmed what I have been saying from the very beginning," he said.

He said that Bambot's e-mail, widely used in newspaper accounts without the Pangandamans comment, had hurt the family.

"We were tried by publicity, but I know the truth will come out," the senator-reform economy said. "It's been painful for my family."

He said his camp would pursue the criminal cases in court.

Ted Fiamma, lawyer of the Pangandamans, said he would sue the club findings in the administrative against the De la Paz family.

De la Paz cries foul

De la Paz called the club decision "unfair" and said he was willing to submit to a lie detector test to refute its findings.

"He saw the cases who were mauled twice and yet we were the ones expelled," De la Paz told the Inquirer. "What's happening in our world. The truth doesn't come out."

He said that the findings would ruin the career of his son, "He doesn't seem to want to play any more."

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
MONDAY
JANUARY 12, 2009

Reds urge attacks on RP, US Balikatan forces in Bicol

By Dolly T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE Philippines (CPP) has ordered its armed wing, the New People's Army, to attack Filipino and American military forces that will be conducting joint military exercises in three Bicol provinces—Albay, Sorsogon and Masbate—in April.

"[We want] to Bicol are specifically instructed to launch as many tactical offensives as they can to annoy, unnerve the regime in preparation of the Balikatan exercises and to prevent the US military from strengthening its foothold in the region," the CPP said in a statement sent to the Inquirer yesterday.

The CPP instructed all communist guerrilla units across the country as well to coordinate in staging tactical offensives to prevent any entry forces.

The current NPA strength has been pegged at 5,229 armed men, by the military.

40th anniversary

The CPP celebrated its 40th year on Dec. 26, with the assertion of a "few more years to step up the insurgency and move closer to its goal of toppling the government to establish a Maoist state.

The communists have been conducting guerrilla warfare for just four decades against the government.

The rebel group urged the Filipino people to oppose and prevent the deployment of US troops to more areas of the country including the Bicol region, by using the Balikatan joint exercises as a pretext.

The CPP said the plan to conduct the annual Balikatan joint military exercise not only in Bicol but in other parts of the country signaled heightened US military intervention in the local civil war.

"In doing so, the US seeks to pave the way for the future regular access of troops to guerrilla fronts in the Bicol region where the NPA operates," the CPP said.

US spy planes

The CPP claimed that in the past three years, there have been several sightings of US spy planes in the vicinity of NPA guerrilla fronts in Central Luzon, southern Tagalog, Bicol, northern and southern Mindanao.

Recently, US troops have become involved in active and mobile (to the AFP's (Armed Forces of the Philippines) combat operations against the NPA in Mindanao," the CPP said.

Last week, Capt. Kelly Schneider, commander of the 304th Naval Construction Regiment, visited the Bicol region to see to the final stages of surveying and planning for the scheduled Balikatan "[mission] to shoulder to shoulder[, which is now] in the Philippines in the country.

Last year's Balikatan was held in Mindanao.

The Balikatan is part of the mutual defense treaty between the Philippines and the United States. Its primary objective is to improve the "interoperability" of the two countries' armed forces for mutual defense.

According to Schneider, some 600 American doctors, engineers and nurses, belonging particularly to the military, will join the month-long exercise to provide humanitarian aid to dispersed areas in the three Bicol provinces.

A military report claimed these provinces to be bailiwicks of the communist insurgency in the Bicol region.

Military officials in the region have assured the public that the aims of the exercises were "peace and development" and there would be no war games with US forces, only humanitarian assistance in the form of medical missions and engineering works.

But the CPP dismissed the "no military exercise and only humanitarian work" as "pure hogwash."

Specific objectives

"The US military does not train for any operation or mission by any name without specific military objectives. Joint military exercises and humanitarian missions are only ways or cover for US troops to gain access to the guerrilla fronts to carry out physical and actual terrain mapping, conduct surveillance, secure local agents and influence the local government and road infrastructure," the CPP said.

According to the CPP central Gen. Ed Barbo alias, head of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement Commission, had already admitted that to conducting the forthcoming Balikatan exercises in the Bicol region, the US military has a specific objective of familiarizing its forces with guerrilla conditions and learning how to conduct operations in the area.

Woman seized from hospital was NPA rebel, says military

LUCENA CITY—THE military here said a wounded rebel yesterday that a wounded woman it had seized from a Manila hospital was in fact a commander New People's Army (NPA) rebel who was wounded during an ambush of a police patrol car in Real, Quezon, March 19, Inc. 3.

Military spokesperson First Lt. Gerry Frank Sayson of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division based in Tanay, Rizal, said the woman guerrilla in identified only as "Ka Hannah" was acquainted with her father, Ramon de los Santos Aunzal, 66, barangay in a government hospital where the wounded rebel has been transported.

"The visit became a tearful reunion of the family" said Sayson in a statement to the Inquirer Sunday.

The Aunzals belong to the Communist rebellion in the highlands of Real province, the military official said.

Quoting Aunzal, Sayson said Ka Hannah left her family nine years ago to avenge a brother killed in clash to one of the tribesmen.

"From then on he heard nothing about his daughter's whereabouts," he said.

The Aunzals described their daughter as "a quiet and likable person."

"They were all surprised to learn Ka Hannah was an NPA and had been involved in many encounters and abandoned by her comrades at the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Sta. Mesa, Manila," Sayson said.

Sayson said Ka Hannah had left a bullet during the ambush of a police patrol car in the village of Maribed singed by members of the NPA Herdin Aunzo-Antonio Command.

The NPA had encountered land mines, Sayson said, and a policeman was killed while two others were wounded.

Three other land mines—before Inquirer Correspondent Hilito Officers J. Albert Ubasa and Arvin Agamon—engaged the rebels in a brief gun battle. When the policemen met out of ammunition, they were captured by the rebels and taken "prisoner of war."

Dolly T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

7 more Pinoy seamen freed by Somalis

By Jeremie Rating

SEVEN MORE Filipino seamen are free after Somali pirates released their Iranian-owned cargo ship, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Citing a report from the Philippine Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, DFA spokesperson Enteni Mangibin said in a statement that the Filipino crew of the MT Delight was "safe and in good health."

The DFA will facilitate the repatriation of the Filipinos if they want to return to the country, he said.

The 23-crew MV Delight, owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, was hijacked in the Gulf of Aden on Nov. 18 while en route to the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas from Suez, Egypt.

The release of the Delight's crew followed that of 19 Filipino seamen on the oil tanker MV Biscaglia on Friday.

The release leave 65 Filipino seamen on four ships still held by the kinds of bound pirates. The ships are the MT Melvin Swakopmund (hijacked on Oct. 23), MT Stolt Strength (Nov. 12), Tinsen Sea (Nov. 14) and MV Chemstar Venus (Nov. 16).

Mangibin said the Philippine ambassador to Bahrain was instructed to seek the assistance of the United States Naval Forces Central Command of the US 5th Fleet, which is part of an international task force monitoring piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Most but not all private ships sailing between Somalia have intensified their security actions in the gulf, an important shipping lane connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Think small, OFWs told

FILIPINO WORKers, including those employed in the global economic crisis, should think about engaging in food-based products and availing themselves of the numerous incentives for small businesses under the Barangay Micro Business Enterprises (BMBE) Act, a labor group said yesterday.

The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) called on the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to open a special loan window for returning overseas Filipino workers who may wish to set up small businesses under the 2002 law.

"This will put a portion of the Overseas Filipino Workers' hard-for-DFWs to greater productive use, for the short benefit of the beneficiaries," said TUCP secretary general Rolando Mendoza.

$25-M collected

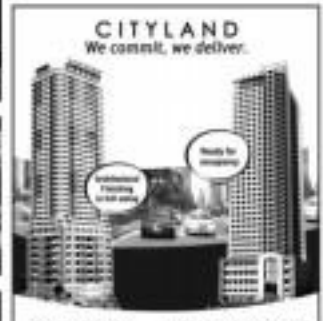
According to Mendoza, each OFW pays a $25 membership fee to Owwa. Based on an estimated one million Filipinos leaving for overseas jobs each year, he said Owwa collects around $25 million or P1.2 billion from OFWs yearly.

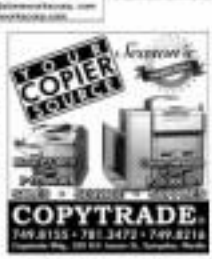
The fees go to a fund that provides benefits, including low-cost loans, to migrant workers and their families in the Philippines.

Mendoza said the BMBE Law or Republic Act No. 9178, grant incentives and privileges to businessmen-based micro-organizations with assets of under P3 million.

The law supports the development of small manufacturing, processing, trading and service shops through the grant of incentives in the registration as well as granting of income benefits.

Jeremie Rating





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OPINION

Impeaching the Chief

EDITORIAL

NOTHING MAY COME OF IT, YET THERE REALLY are stirrings in the House of Representatives over the prospect of another impeachment—of yet another Chief Justice. Five years after the Nationalist People's Coalition engineered a politically motivated and blatantly unsuccessful impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario Davide, some political operators are mulling the possibility of an impeachment case against Chief Justice Reynato Puno. This time, however, the motivation is both political and pecuniary.

What constitutionalists call "the terrible sword" of impeachment has turned into an extortionist's knife.

Supreme Court spokesman Midas Marquez says he thinks there is, in fact, such an impeachment attempt. "We have heard of the same moves, but we don't know where they are coming from."

We can hazard a guess, and a good one. They are coming from parties involved in or associated with the Lindayag election case, but when were sure-exit balloons have been lifted even higher on the hot air of political calculations. In this twisted calculus, the Arroyo administration's best interests lie in removing Puno from the Supreme Court before his scheduled retirement in May 2010.

Why do we say so?

Last month, 4 termites Lonie Baraggo held a news conference to denounce what he called an "irregularity" in Supreme Court decision-making, and pointed the finger directly at Chief Justice Puno.

"My suspicion is the Chief Justice may have a hand in this irregularity," Baraggo wrote, citing a Supreme Court decision on the Lindayag case allegedly unprecedented on Puno's orders. "These circumstances led me to believe the Chief Justice may have been dishonest in his dealings ... and may prejudice the faith of people in the judiciary."

Altogether, these are extraordinary accusations: they come from an obscure litigant, based on a copy of a draft decision and aimed directly at the head of the judiciary.

Baraggo's news conference was the beginning of the trial balloon period. It did not take long before political operators saw the political advantages of an impeachment case against a Chief Justice not perceived to be aligned with the administration, and steered pumping hot air. A court insider who asked not to be identified told the Inquirer about "loud" talk of a hostile privilege speech that will be delivered on the House floor soon week, followed by a filing of a complaint.

Not surprisingly, opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson sees the Palace hand at work. "This move is very politically motivated and should not be given attention nor supported. To have control of the Supreme Court is what Malacañang wanted from the very beginning," Lacson said in Filipino.

What quickens congressmen's interest is the ease is the possibility of more political favors. As opposition congressmen have alleged after every dismissal of an impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo, Malacañang knows how to look after the welfare of its allies. Those seen supporting the complaint against Puno must have clear the mark.

Because on the merits of the case, there is, to her, no case. Baraggo is right that Puno stopped the promulgation of the July 31, 2008 draft decision on the Lindayag case by Associate Justice Ruben Reyes, despite the signatures of 10 justices. Reyes retired from the Court last month. But Baraggo, a litigant in the case, has refused to recognize that Puno did so for excellent legal reasons. A total of nine of the 14 justices had concurred "in the result"—meaning to say, they agreed with the outcome but not with the reasoning. When Chief Justice Puno realized this, he asked the Court to reconsider any action unseating a legislator through a ruling where a majority of justices are unable to agree on the reasoning. This would have resulted in a decision without any "doctrinal value." The Supreme Court then "unanimously decided to withhold the promulgation of the pronouncements of Justice Reyes." (Newsbreak editor Marites Vitug details the circumstances of the controversial election case over at the ABS-CBN news website.)

The Court also scheduled oral arguments for August, where glaring factual omissions in the Reyes ponencia surfaced.

Thus, what we have here is a case of the internal procedures of the judiciary actually working in the public's best interests. But political sponsors have seized on the misstatement of disgruntled parties, to make mischief for the high court's chief.

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QC gov't spending for national roads

GOVERNMENT REGULATORY BODIES ARE supposed to protect the public from abuses and inefficiency of businesses. But sometimes they protect the businesses, not the public. Take the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB). It is supposed to protect the public using privately financed and constructed roads (like the North and South Luzon expressways and the Coastal Road) from being overcharged with toll fees. It is required by law to hold public hearings so that the people can protest if the toll fees exceed the toll fees meant to collect are too much.

But what did the TRB do? During the long Christmas holiday, it doubled the toll fees for SLEX, effective on the first day of the New Year. This is clear case of double-cross on the public. The TRB is supposed to protect, not fool the public. Instead, it was the one who pulled a fast one on the people. It is supposed to prevent by raising the toll fees during the holiday season and making it effective on Jan. 1. The public did not have an opportunity to file any opposition. The increase becomes final if there is no opposition within three months. There was no public hearing, no petition to increase was kept from the public.

It can be compared to the theft of the mask by Vicente Manansala painted on the wall of the dining room of the National Press Club. The mural was partly restored in 2007 during the Christmas holidays, when nobody usually goes to the NPC. The mural remains missing.)

That was only the first close dropping. The second close will drop this March when the toll fees for the Coastal Road to Cavite are also increased.

Naturally, the people using the SLEX and Coastal Road are up in arms. Private motorists, buses, jeepneys, cargo trucks, vans, vehicles, etc. will have to pay more and their income will be reduced unless they charge their passengers and cargo shipping rates. Fares for buses, jeepneys, vegetables, rice, fish and meat from southern Luzon will cost more as Metro Manila because cargo charges will have to be raised. This is a double whammy on the people who are already suffering from the effects of a global economic meltdown and the vanishing jobs.

The TRB said it raised the toll fees so that its revenues will not be discouraged because, it says, the representatives of guys said that Citra, an Indonesian company who built the SLEX, did not invest a single peso on SLEX. The money for its construction, PS billion, came from the Land Bank, according to former Assemblywoman Yvonne Millora, chair of the board of the National Council for Commerce Promotion. Ms. Divin Medina, national president, and Steve Rano, national president of Bulan, all of whom went to the Equitan in Manila to register their opposition to the TRB increase.

They added that SLEX has not increased its toll fees although all the money for its construction came from the Luzon coastal Bonanza if the right fees now been sold to a company controlled by Manny Pangilinan and there are no plans for an increase.

The Council also said that the Road Users Tax, which is collected from all those who register their vehicles, is not being used to maintain roads as the law mandates but to quiet the other purposes (such as for the elections?).

Finally, they said that we have the highest toll rates in the world, and that in other countries toll rates are kept low because they have a direct influence on the prices of consumer goods.

On the other side of the spectrum is the Quezon City government under Mayor Feli-ciano Belmonte. The city has been spending for the maintenance, improvement and construction of new roads although they are national roads that ought to be funded by the national government. Because the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways [DPWH], according to Mayor Belmonte in a private interview. But because the DPWH is not provided enough funds by Congress (most of taxpayers' money go to the legislators in the form of pork barrel funds and kickbacks), it cannot keep up with its responsibilities. As the QC government, the labor city in the Philippines (P) billion on the roads), through a combination of high rates, rebuilt the roads without much inclination spending, has to ride over the DPWH with loans in order to finish road projects.

For example, the QC government has paid private landowners for the right of way for the long-delayed Congressional Avenue that will connect Tandang Sora to Luzon Avenue that, in turn, connects to Commonwealth Avenue. Congressional now connects to Tandang Sora to and will soon be connected to Visayas Avenue in the west and to Luzon Avenue in the east. The Luzon Avenue extension, completed according to the DPWH, in the first half of 2009 after the relocation of squatters who have flocked to the road right of way.

Meanwhile, the QC government has also bought the right-of-way to extend Commonwealth Avenue from Quirino Highway to Sandiman. From there, the road will connect to NLEX. Then, travelers can proceed smoothly from northern Luzon through C-5, through Commonwealth and Quirino, across to NLEX and northern Luzon. That would substantially lessen time needed to south and cut the shipping costs of goods.

Some QC residents have expressed the wish, though, that the good metric spend some of city hall's abundant money to aid the repair of squatter areas, like Payatas in peace and order, health and sanitation and give the city the title of "squatter-capital of the Philippines."

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

Marcelino for president

I REMEMBER READING A REMARK BY THE late Teodoro Valdez in the Free Eastern Economic Review years ago. It talked of a not-come-until-the-cops in a small province in Bangkok that against their superior.

The many years, the cops had been analyzing documents and public notices. They were angry, influential men and had accumulated quite some of loot. Also, their chief hogged the money and would not share it with them. Frustrated with, officers to persuade him to distribute the spoils, and vowing themselves the number of would-be intruders. The cops liked the idea.

The point of the story, a true one though quite accidental, is that you get used to malfeasance, you will no longer find anything wrong with it. You will find the wrong elsewhere.

I remembered that story in light of Solicitor-General Antonio Nachura's pathetic campaign speech recently the solicitor-only for the "Antonio Trio" on DZRH stationery and submitting it to Raul Gonzalez for signature. Nachura is astonishingly a lawyer for one of the accused and Gonzalez is even more astonishingly the secretary of justice. The solicitor-only is just a piece of paper. Nachura says, it means nothing without Gonzalez's signature. Since it he had forged Gonzalez's signature, that would have been a crime.

The point of the story, a true one and no longer an oddity here, is that you get used to malfeasance, you will no longer find anything wrong with it. You will find the wrong elsewhere.

The update not just to Nachura but to Gonzalez. Gonzalez himself found nothing wrong with the issuance of one of the accused writing things on DOJ paper. Nachura undergone not guilty because he did not sign the letter. Gonzalez also blew the whistle on state prosecutors dropping the case on the "Antonio Trio" for a insufficient evidence and a prosecutor blew the Gonzalez's had was that Marcelino did not manage the people who exactly to blow but was not to blow it up.

The only requirement for it is that Gonzalez is used to seeing—and signing—things written on DOJ paper for various purposes. Since re-

THERE'S THE RUB

Comrades de Quirino

dining lunch from the canteen to springing the salaries of sick kids from jail. He'll always find the wrong elsewhere.

But Chief Bad for the Bound Marcelino?

Thank God in the first place that he got Gonzalez in his place. Though one is not prone to understand why he had to apologize afterward. Everyone I know has the appropriate sense to [illegible] "Don't talk to me like that!" None of it in his law-enforcement.

Thank God in the second place that Marcelino's experience in the PCIJA and his "interlude" in the AFP including the retired generals, are backing him up full force. Else, if I suspect many of them are doing so in the hope that the return of Erap will walk off with them, there is a devil blind The world by its dazzling brilliance to claim your part in spreading the darkness. I completely endorse Rodolfo Biazon's plan for the Senate to committed Marcelino and for the still-vacated Biazon to be Distinguished Senator. But, the highest post-retirement award for soldier. The latter is an addition to the combat record, it is superior to it. I've always thought, and said, that moral courage was by far the greater form of courage than the physical one. It is so much harder to show.

Any time when politics and eavesdropping take the day, power daily being offered of the [illegible] being punished and the guilty rewarded, of the good being damned and the bad promoted to high heavens, Marcelino's honesty shines through. Fortunately to be elected it would the greatest advertising boring to be elected his record, identification. He did not refrain the little because it would bring admiration from the poor, many of them probably thought him stupid for it. He didn't, as he himself puts it sarcastically, because it was the right thing to do.

I myself have a couple of recommendations.

One is to appoint Marcelino partners to Sen. Sadonas. And have him investigate Mrs Jolibee. Gutierrez for all sorts of crimes and misdemeanors. He is the only man I can think of not yet to do the job it is meant to do. Marcelino having shown he is one of the few public officials who can do the job they are meant to do.

The second, completely seriously, is to put the office of the Ombudsman under the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. The reason for this is simple. There is a drug that addicts the brain more thoroughly than fentanyl, fentanyl only going to cure to feel the pangs of love or lust. There is a drug that sends people on longer and farther power trips than shabu, shabu only causing a few days and weakening their sexes impotent afterward. There is a drug that is far more addictive than heroin, an amount of rehabilitation being addressed to it.

That drug is corruption.

Corruption is the most dangerous thing of all to the human mind. It gives the user the belief that the purge of lust or love of money it sends the user to hunger and farther power trips, making them feel like they deserve to rule forever. It is the most addictive drug of all, and sure, quite unfortunately that does not kill the user only everyone around him, or her.

It is no small testimony to Marcelino that he is a sublimely poetic one—that Marcelino set out to take on drug pushers and users and ended up taking on the justice department. Then we can start the train. The justice department is the biggest producer of the most dangerous drug in the country, so the biggest supplier of it to the biggest users in the country, to be found in the Palace by the Pasig. At the very least, you can't have a train more addicted to corruption to the users of power than the Palace is.

What can I say? Never mind Bonhoffman, Marcelino for president.

Appointing a chief justice

APPOINTING A CHIEF JUSTICE SHOULD BE no more complicated than appointing an associate justice. When Chief Justice Reynato Puno steps down, however, sometime in May 2010, a lame duck President may not be able to do the job.

Article VIII, Section 5 of the Constitution says: "Two months immediately before the next presidential elections and up to the end of his term, a President or Acting President shall not make appointments, except temporary appointments to executive positions when continued vacancies therein will prejudice public service or endanger public safety."

This provision was introduced in order to prevent the occurrence of what under the 1935 Constitution were called "midnight appointments" when a president, before leaving office, made a slew of appointments to the executive office and the judiciary, many of which were of questionable legality during the effgo.

Chief Justice Puno will finish his term sometime in May 2010, just much within the period covered by Section 15. Applying Section 15, therefore, President Macapagal-Arroyo should not be able to appoint Puno's successor. The next president will have to do the honors.

Article VIII, Section 4, however, says that vacancies in the Supreme Court should be filled within 90 days from the occurrence of the vacancy. Can President Arroyo make use of this provision to name the next president the legality of filling the effice

Reviving a nuke plant in a fragile world

LETTERS

TO HELP CUSHION RECESSION, THE government is examining a range of pro-electricity-enhancing measures. In this context, the National Power Corp. (Napocor) has engaged a Korean firm to study the feasibility of reviving the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP). Indeed, we must enhance our nation's ability to borrow and respond in increasingly complex threats, and to plan for major, long-range contingencies.

Some of these contingencies—such as a dramatic shortfall in power generation—may seem remote, but they arguably can shake our economy to its core. They therefore demand our attention.

Any plan to revive the BNPP however, should not rest on economic terms alone. It must take into full account a range of social, political, cultural and technical issues. And all these must be considered and debated at the highest levels of the executive and legislative branches of government, not at the corporate level of Napocor or the Department of Energy.

The financial aspects of reviving the BNPP would be daunting. The country lost $2.2 billion on this white elephant, excluding the $103,000 a day in interest paid over a 36-year period.

At the current exchange rate, the cost of BNPP's rehabilitation is likely to exceed a billion dollars—or roughly 30 percent of the estimated P134 billion needed to shield the country from the crippling effects of recession. And that's just for starters.

Also factor in the uncertainties of the Bataan plant's operation. These uncertainties include the inherent dangers that the plant poses, the enormous dilemma over spent radioactive waste of over 300 tons yearly that will inevitably impact on health and on reproduction through genetic mutations. There is also the financial and technological demands of building and maintaining a low-net dent risk facility.

There are 400 operating nuclear power plants (NPPs) in the world today; only 31 of these are less than 10 years old. All are without adequate final storage. Most NPPs, therefore, mean man's waste to threaten the integrity of fragile ecosystems and human societies for thousands, even millions, of years.

There is a renewed interest in NPPs because they emit less greenhouse gases. But we should remember that, following the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, a study of the BNPP revealed some 4,000 defects. No clean plants require a very long and high degree of safety culture which does not exist in our country at this time.

Without wanting for the outcome of Napocor's study, we should look at the energy options that pose no peril to our people and help prevent the creeping climate change catastrophe. Renewable energy sources—wind, solar, geothermal, ocean tides and bio-mass—may be far cheaper and safer prospects for our country.

Global warming and climate change were on that we live in a fragile world.

—RODOLFO T. ARANAS,
presidential advisor on Global Warming and Climate Change

What really happened at Lim Seng's execution

WE REFER TO MANUEL L. QUEZON III'S column in the Dec. 29, 2008 issue of the Inquirer. We believe that as a historian he should factually and objectively record events. We would welcome correction of some glaring errors in his otherwise interesting account of the execution of convicted Chinese drug dealer Lim Seng.

1. Lim Seng was tried and sentenced in his conduct 1972 by Military Commission No. 2, which was composed of seven members. The military execution that followed was mandated by the execution order issued by the commission after proper proceedings. Then-PC Chief Maj. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos had no hand in the formulation of the order. Neither did he issue the "final" no reason to—as a military executor.

2. The execution was not done in front of the "reviewing stand" but in a lot behind the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Fort Bonifacio. The site was chosen for its low elevation and the natural backdrop around it that can easily stop bullets. An execution in an open space such as the front of the reviewing stand would have posed a serious danger to people in the vicinity.

3. President Marcos ordered that a hotline to the site be maintained on the day of execution for him to receive instant reports of the night's word in case Minister before the execution, Santos called President Marcos who gave the "go-ahead" order.

4. Brig. Gen. Emiliano Templo, who was present during the entire proceedings, confirmed that Lim Seng refused to be blindfolded or even present, wore their regular uniform. But the "gestapo dressed like Nazi officers to flaunt riding pants and boots," might have added some drama and a certain dash to Quezon's story, but it was certainly untrue.

5. The executors were carried out by a firing squad of eight. (The squad's commanding officer loaded seven rifles with live ammunition and one rifle with a blank). The dozen witnesses of Lim Seng were present at the execution.

After the squad fired, a medical doctor and a chaplain approached Lim Seng to check on him and administer the last sacraments. Lim Seng's body twitched for a few seconds; he expired shortly. Contrary to what Quezon thought, an officer administering the coup de grâce with a head shot was not part of the procedure. In fact, there was a second firing squad on standby at the execution site ready to fire the new round, if necessary. The account that Lim Seng remained alive for sometime and allowed to bleed to death while the squad was waiting for another round of ammunition is inaccurate.

6. It is now more appropriate now to propose an apology to prevent calamity-seekers from exploiting the execution site. After the execution, all military officers left as the body of Lim Seng was taken immediately to the morgue by the security detail. That "interruption schedule" called for the body to dry there because "no blood" did not and could not have taken place.

—MICK A. LAGUEVA,
spokesperson,
Officers Held V. Ramos, Makati City

Where's our pension? GMA's holiday economics a bane to GSIS pensioner

"HOLIDAY ECONOMICS" IS PROVing to be an enemy burden to Philippine government pensioners like my wife, a retired career foreign service officer who served our government at home and abroad for nearly 30 years.

On the morning of Jan. 2, after the holiday hiatus, my wife and I were dismayed to learn that the Government Service Insurance System under De Guzmanship of Winston Garcia has not made any retirement January 2009 pension available at Landbank. This must be the case of many other GSIS pensioners.

It goes without saying that pensioners deserve better service from the GSIS.

—VICENTE G. VALDEHUESA,
retired career ambassador,
3 Dresden Ojeda St.,
Barangay Paligsahan,
Quezon City 1100

Bloggers' call for justice becomes an injustice

I AM WRITING THIS IN RESPONSE TO AN article about the "golf incident" involving members of the Pangandaman and De la Paz families (Inquirer, 1/3/09).

A member of the De la Paz family "blogged" the incident on the web and soon the story caught fire in the Filipino blogosphere. Bamboo de la Paz cited this an injustice had been committed against her family. There's no problem with that.

The issue is that in her demand for justice, acts of injustice are being committed against the Pangandamans. Everyone knows that there's a "B-side" to every story (to borrow the words of Sly Stallone), but people seem to have already formed their minds on the issue, apparently on the Pangandamans, even without hearing yet from their side. Random name-calling continues right on her blog, and readers could even buy account above-mentioned.

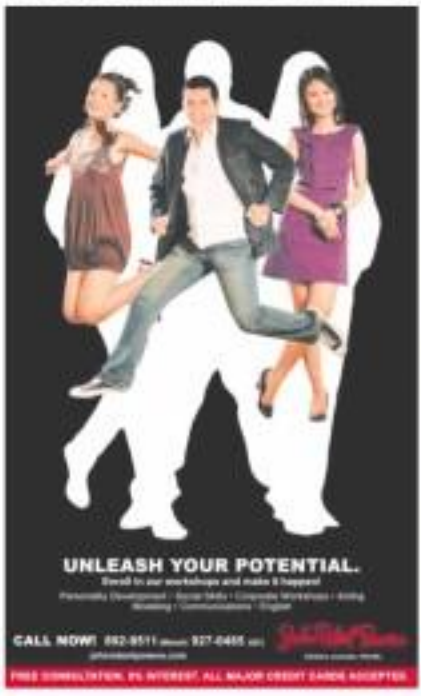
Did she include every detail of the incident, such as the fact that it was reportedly her in-laws who were behind House Representative in with a case phrase; and the bid that other members of the De la Paz family went to the golf club with a bat and an ice pick? Oh the way, consider yourself lucky if we have befalls you when you say such things about a Muslim's mother.)

Everyone's calling for the Pangandamans' heads to roll. In Bamboo's blog, many "posters" hurled abusive words, threats and explosive (and insults against the women folk of the Pangandamans). These invectives remain without censure on her blog as of this writing, as if they have been given approval. There are blatant acts of bullying, which the bloggers themselves claim to condemn. One of the bloggers even threatened to send the Ilagas—the Muslim-killing corsairs—to go after the Pangandaman clan, no doubt because they are Muslims. (Non Ingrits!) Where is due process?

There has yet to be an adjudication on this matter in a court of law. Until then both sides have the right to be heard and to explain their side. But people have quickly accused the Pangandamans of narrative cases a bill and Ingrat. Full investigation of the incident—perhaps because they are Muslims and come from Mindanao.

The bloggers betray their own principles and distorted sense of justice—for which they are violently clamoring.

—MOHAMMAD HUDA,
hdhuda@yahoo.com



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PDEA agent fails to show up at NBI probe

By Jeannette I. Andrade

SEN. FERDINAND MARCELINO G. "FM" PIMENTEL III of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said he charged with obstruction of justice should he fail to deliver on his promise to issue a sworn statement on the bribe offered to him for the release of the so-called "Mabuhay Boys."

Arnel Dalumpines, head of the National Bureau of Investigation's Special Task Force (NBI-STF), said he sent agents to the PDEA office when Marcelino failed to appear before the agency on Friday.

Marcelino, head of the PDEA Special Enforcement Service, said he would prefer that his boss act on affidavit through the agency's legal division chief Glenn Lanaro.

"We wanted to get a statement from him on the Q and A (question and answer) here, but he told us that he preferred to simply submit a sworn statement on Wednesday," Dalumpines said.

The NBI official said Marcelino claimed that he was not able to go to the Pasay fiscal because he was busy.

Dalumpines pointed out that the Q and A here would have elaborated on the allegations of bribery for which the NBI had been tapped by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to investigate.

"His statement must include details of who offered the bribe, when and where the three alleged bribery attempts happened. Otherwise, his affidavit would be pointless," Dalumpines said.

Marcelino earlier claimed that he rejected three bribe offers ranging from P2 million to P20 million in exchange for the release of drug suspects Richard Sherlen, Jorge Joseph and Joseph Sexion. The suspects were arrested in a buy-bust operation on Sept. 23 last year.

The PDEA agent also claimed police department officials were paid off with P80 million to dismiss the charges against the three young men.

Dalumpines expressed the hope that Marcelino would elaborate on the allegations. "We certainly cannot use news clippings in our investigations. We have to have our own evidence to use in our findings," he told the Inquirer.

Marcelino was first invited to appear before the NBI on Jan. 6 but reportedly begged off because of a purported PDEA operation. The second subpoena invitation was on Friday.

"I appeal to Major Marcelino: If he is really sincere in going after the people who, he claimed, offered him bribes, and if he is really sincere in his campaign to stop the irregularities in the government, then he should cooperate with us," Dalumpines said.

GMA: Go on leave

From page A1

following Wednesday's order. The resolution dismissing the charges against the "Mabuhay Boys" was upheld by Zuño.

Spare no one

The President said no one should be spared. "The full force of the government's power is set against those that betray people. So none should be applied swiftly and successively, more so in the case which includes illegal drugs," she said.

"I am a mother who is bothered by an illegal conspiracy to let loose on our streets new peddlers of illegal drugs," Ms Arroyo said. "What if they hit on my sister?"

Gonzalez also said he would take up with Ms Arroyo the case of Undersecretary Rhoda Bienvenida who called up the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to inquire about the three suspects' continued detention despite being cleared by the prosecutors.

"The oldest thing is to let all of them go on leave. That's a presidential order," Gonzalez said.

Bienvenida, too

Asked if the officials who should go on leave included Prosecutors John Resado, Miraol Ladaga, Phillip Ronpe and Zuño, Gonzalez answered in the affirmative.

"That can also include Undersecretary Bienvenida; I want to clarify his case with the President because he was also deeply involved," Gonzalez said.

Bienvenida, aside from making the call to PDEA upon the request of an aide of one of the respondents, also had his secretary send a release order drafted by Resado and Bernard Lawyer, Baldomero Moreno, to the office of Gonzalez for his signature.

PDEA agents arrested Resado and Joseph in Ayala-Alabang, Muntinlupa City and Tecson in Cubao, Quezon City in September last year. The group was allegedly into the sale of banned substances such as Ecstasy and cocaine in some of the high-end bars in Metro Manila.

"[The prosecutors] has already asked that they be relieved [of their duties in the antidrug task force of the justice department]. I wanted to clarify because it might appear they are being punished without trial," Gonzalez said.

Other government prosecutors were also seen by his foe allegedly bungling the case against Chinese suspected drug dealer Lucky Ong. The PDEA also gathered evidence against Ong only to be rebuffed by the prosecutors.

Cabinet agenda

Secretary Silvestre Bello yesterday said the drug problem would be the first on the agenda in the Cabinet meeting tomorrow.

Monina "Tito" Sono III, chair of the Dangerous Drugs Board, was tapped to make a presentation on the status of all drug cases in the country, Bello said.

An order for the release of the three young men drafted by Resado and penned on a Justice department letterhead for the signature of Gonzalez added fuel to the controversy.

Unethical

Gonzalez did not sign the release order, saying that he was still reviewing the resolution.

Gonzalez, who had met with Moreno a few days before the Christmas last year, said the bribery story also prevented him from signing the release order.

He scolded Moreno's move to draft the order as unethical, while an anonymous source quoted the Supreme Court to disbar Moreno.

"We should not allow a breach in our determined war against the menaces of illegal drugs and against [any] justice-politics on a broader level," the source said.

"We are witness to the tragedy that befell countries that have taken a pause on their war on illegal drugs ... Our war on drugs should be vigilant and unrelenting. It should not be compromised," she said.

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Lamang ang naza kapsula!

Read-along stories dwell on change, new beginnings

From page A1

she had read to children in the past, but this was the first time to read to a large venue.

"I am in Sorsogon where no t-shirt read to kids. But this is a different experience for me. I was actually very nervous. I was concerned the children would not listen or they would not understand the story because some of the words were difficult," she said.

If she was nervous, it didn't show. The children were mesmerized when she started reading and even acting out the story.

Not enough teachers

Hilomath, one of the 10 winners of the Metrobank Foundation's 2008 Outstanding Teachers, read the children's version of "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Dr Spencer Johnson and Charles Kenneth Blanchard.

The story is about four mice who lose their cheese and start looking for new sources of food. No moral lesson? One must venture out to find meaning to life and in this case ... cheese.

Hilomath teaches Social Studies at Pedro Elar High School in Municipality City 6 enrolled 15 years. Due to the low enrollment of the school, not only from her school but from Municipality.

"I am happy to be part of the session. I teach fourth year high school students. In my experience, most children can read but they cannot comprehend what they're reading. Teachers can only do so much. In our school, the ratio is one teacher per 65 students or 1:65. The ideal is 1:30 or 1:36. We need help and Success Read-Along is a big help," she said.

According to Irene Lahiad, senior program manager of the Metrobank Foundation, "Hilomath won the award partly because of her room further to the community aspect from her teaching skills."

In 2006-07, Hilomath conducted a research on the effects of computer games on student performance.

"The results showed that computer games had a negative effect on the students' class attendance ... they were coming dazed. Because of this, the school passed an ordinance forbidding school children to enter computer shops after school hours. School officials do random checks of computer shops near the school," Hilomath said.

Laughter

Returning as storytellers were teachers from Sophia School, led by its principal Ana Montes.

While Abacan read, teachers Daisy Lacuble, Elsie Ada Vega and Nerry Revilla acted out "It Jane ni Bjorny Raval Tamayo" by Eugene Evasco, which drew laughter from the audience.

The story is about a kingdom where no one is allowed to laugh. Newcomer Jean makes everyone happy and transforms the kingdom into a happier place.

Evasco also read "The Most Beautiful Insect" by Marivic Sarmiento and Debbie Pasado, a story about a good-hearted but ugly caterpillar's transformation into a beautiful butterfly.

Hanan Anda, 13, one of the guests of Child Hope Asia, said his favorite story was "Jean ..." because of the lively way it was told. "Nakakatawa pa 'di was ba't," he said, smiling.

Sue Villas, Child Hope volunteer, said the children were from the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) complex and Bachelan areas. "They really enjoyed the activity. After a read-along session, they tell us that they learned a lot and are able to recommend their experience."

For Ian Montes, 12, also from Child Hope, the story which stood out was "Bad-hair-get-baby ..."

"I have a younger brother," he said. "The story teaches older brothers like me to not be jealous of younger siblings."

Chinese New Year session

Special read-along sessions will be held on Jan. 21 in SM Bicutan in Bicutan and on Jan. 24 (in celebration of Chinese New Year) at the Ongpin office in Binondo.

Interested participants may contact Elvira Caparros at Globe Bolinao at 897-4808, local 329. Slots are on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Success Read-Along was launched in May 2007 by the Ayala Research Department, the Library and the Ayala Museum. The project received an award of excellence in November 2008 from the prestigious Philippine Quill, an honor given by the International Association of Business Communicators. With Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research

PEACE OFFERINGS given to Jewish, Muslim and Christian Leaders:

Replica of *The Ark of the Covenant* and ABS Herbs products

ISRAEL: To fulfill Yahweh's (God) instructions to help reconcile and unite the Jewish, Muslim and Christian peoples worldwide, **Ms. Grace Galindez-Gupana, YAHweh's (God) Ambassador of Goodwill for Israel and Philippines** to the world / VP-CEO of ABS Gen Herbs Int'l Corp. led an **Identificational Repentance Ceremony** in Jerusalem during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) in October 2008. The declaration of reconciliation and unity were also made during the HalleluYah (Global Feast) The Redemption of Christmas) on December 25, 2008.

GRACE GALINDEZ-GUPANA, YAHweh's (God) Ambassador of Goodwill for Israel and Philippines to the WORLD/VP-CEO ABS Gen Herbs Int'l Corp. (right) with Mr. Ismael Akel and Mr. Isaac Johnson during the peaceful ceremonies at the Temple Mount.

In a powerful prophetic gesture at the Temple Mount, Ms Gupana brought together symbolic representations of the three peoples from the three major religious groups of the world and gave them replicas of the *Ark of the Covenant* and ABS Herbs products as Peace Offerings: Mr. Ismael Akel, a businessman in the Old City, Jerusalem, represented Ishmael's descendants (Muslims) while Mr. Isaac Johnson, a Jewish from Texas, USA stood for Isaac's descendants (Jewish). Ms Gupana represented the Christian group.

The *Ark* was the centerpiece of the Tabernacle built by Moses during the Israelites' wilderness journey and symbolized Yahweh's (God) presence. In the Old Testament, Ishmael was Abraham's son by Hagar, the servant of his first wife, Sarah, the mother of Isaac. Yahweh (God) promised Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of the world will be blessed! (Genesis 12:1-3)

GRACE GALINDEZ-GUPANA, (center) YAHweh's (God) Ambassador of Goodwill for Israel and Philippines to the World/VP-CEO of ABS Gen Herb Corp. celebrates with Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders.

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

THE SOLONG RIVER, turned swollen by hours of heavy rain, dumped gravel and mud on the main channel near Barangay Solong in San Miguel, Catanduanes, washing away two houses along its banks.

Floods, landslides displace thousands in Northern Samar

CATARMAN, NORTHERN SAMAR—THOUSANDS OF people were displaced as severe flooding and landslides hit Northern Samar over the weekend.

Heavy rains on Friday night up to early Saturday brought the equivalent of half a month of rainfall, inundating homes, farms and roads.

Thousands of families from mostly low-lying areas have flocked to the evacuation centers in all 24 towns.

While few cases of injuries have been recorded, a family of six was earlier reported to have died in the Mount-land village of Dasi in Lavezares town after their house was buried by landslide.

Felmon Guerrero, chief of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) in Catarman, noted an "abnormal" rise in water level during the 12-hour rain.

The level peaked at 228 millimeters, or equivalent to 15 days of average rainfall in December last year, the whole month of rainfall in October, he said.

"Total rainfall measurement in October was only 314 millimeters and 373 millimeters in the whole month of December," Guerrero said.

The rain was brought by the northeast monsoon and the tail-end of the cold front, which was centered in the province, Guerrero said.

He predicted that raining would continue until February.

Local officials and social workers were stranded in the evacuees.

Most the rains started in December last year, the provincial government has been conducting relief operations in different barangays.

The board declared a state of calamity in December after casting heavy damage to crops, property and infrastructure, and several casualties.

On Saturday, Rep. Mel Dario Sto. district-led relief and rescue operations in Lavezares, one of the worst-hit town.

Dario instructed assistant district engineer Emely Paz of the Department of Public Works and Highways' first engineering district to immediately send roving teams to check and repair any damages to infrastructure.

In Catarman de Oro City, continuous rains which began at about 2 a.m. on Sunday flooded the streets.

Part of the national highway going to Iligan City, Gil. Rivera Avenue, Carmen, Villaria and Bonbon Streets and urban villages located near swollen creeks were submerged.

Big canals along the national highway going to Iligan also overflowed, bringing waist- and knee-deep flood-waters.

Even the house of the city council's government committee chair Cesar Jan Acenas was under water. Acenas lives in Barangay Canitoan-an, a heavily populated village near the Gaisano public market and Limketkai Mall.

City Councilor Jun Nicayas said faulty drainage systems contributed to the flooding.

Nicayas, chair of the council's public safety committee, told the Inquirer that the drainage system has not been properly connected to the outlets leading to the river and sea.

"The big canals have not been properly connected to drain river and sea outlets, thus, prompting the overflow of waters in the streets causing the flood," Nicayas said.

City police chief Senior Supt. Isagani Genabe said shopping was not possible as the areas surrounding the malls were flooded.

"The people in Cagayan de Oro should better stay in their homes to avoid being stranded or have accidents as the rain continues to heavily pour," he said.

Residents along the riverbanks and on islets in the middle of the Cagayan River have been advised to evacuate if the rain continued after 5 p.m.

The water level of the river was reported to be at its highest at 11 p.m.

"We still have a forced evacuation in the low-lying areas if the rain doesn't stop after 5 p.m. as the water rises and the current will be stronger," Genabe said.

Closer to 30,000 persons were displaced by last week's flooding when the Cagayan River overflowed.

Oriental Mindoro Vice Gov. Scott Ilatlatan said some villages in El Salvador, Tagoloan and Balingasag towns were flooded after the river overflowed. *Reports from Rachel D. Arnaiz, Inquirer Visayas and Grace C. Alfaro, Inquirer Mindanao*

For first time, Catanduanes experiences knee-deep flood

VIRAC, CATANDUANES—"IT WAS THE first time we were flooded this high," said housewife Soreyta Ignacio, 46. She was recounting how she and three families in subdivision homes recently got rescued by helicopter. Bandwagons on Tuesday night in Barangay Solong in San Miguel town, 12 kilometers from this capital town.

Ignacio said her family was about to eat dinner at about 7 p.m. when the lights went out and they heard the sound of rushing water.

The Solong River, just 10 meters away, had started to overflow and water was entering their house and 20 others along the bank.

They took refuge in a neighbor's concrete house on higher ground, as floodwaters swept away their clothes, kitchenware and appliances.

When the flood subsided two hours later, the houses were submerged knee-deep in gravel and mud.

The water had subsided, its bed higher than the banks and water flowing through the houses on a hundred-meter stretch of the bank.

Zero casualty

Floodwater also rushed into the concrete house of Nestor Tiwe but his quick response resulted in no loss of lives.

Jimmy Bernal was fortunate as he and his wife Jean went to their farm up in the mountains early Tuesday to look after their rice plants that were ready for harvest.

The couple brought along with them their three young children.

When they got back to their 20-square meter house built at the edge of the bank, it was already buried in a knee-deep muck.

Their chest of new clothes bought last Christmas was gone.

Dolfino Tupal and his wife lost appliances and other possessions. They are now staying with the Bernals.

"When Supertyphoon 'Loleng' struck in 2006, the floodwater was just about chest deep and did not enter our house," Jean recalled.

Last week's inundation also rendered useless the hope of retrieval that the community had bought for the construction of a concrete levee that would have protected it from the river.

Fear

While many villagers were thankful that no one was hurt, they were fearful of what would come next—even as the heavy equipment of National Construction Corp. (NCC) was still under waters and continuing rain to remove the gravel and other debris clogging the main river channel.

Two other barangays—Barlayan and Dariao, 3—were inundated, according to Mayor Edna Bernal, who immediately visited the area and distributed relief goods sent by Gov. Joseph C. Cua.

Cua said the heavy rain started at 6 p.m. on Tuesday and poured nonstop for three hours, causing flash flood in Barangays Gigi and Binanderan in Bato, and four other low-lying villages.

Other barangays which experienced flooding were Ilac, Viroma, Sibod, Subiwon, San Jose and Sagurda in Bagamanoc town and Inici in Viga.

Cua said the rains flooded or isolated 86 villages in Bato, San Miguel, Viga, Bagamanoc, Baras, Caramoran, Pandan and San Andres.

Aborted

Bato Mayor Leo Rodriguez said relief workers and barangay officials saved them from the floods in Gigi and Binanderan, as waters rushed up to the chest in some places and left more than a foot thick of mud in their homes.

Mayor Agnes Papa of Caramoran relayed a plea for help from people in Barangay Inahawanan who had been isolated by the rising river.

Cua, who heads the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, said the downpour resulted in many landslides along the Caramoran-Gigmoto Road.

District engineer Ignacio T. Dilanzo counted 34 landslides along the national road network with two big ones rendering the highway impassable to all kinds of vehicles at Gredilagan, Baras and Villa Aurora, Gigmoto.

Thirteen sections of three major roads were still hardly passable by landslides and flash floods, according to a travel advisory issued at 3 p.m. on Friday by the Department of Public Works and Highways Road.

An updated report of the Office of Civil Defense-Bicol said that as of Friday morning, the number of people "affected" by the floods had reached 67,829 or 9,303 families in 85 villages. *Reports Gemma with a report from Ephraim Aguilin, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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Ghanaian leaves, discovers kindness of Pinoys

By Tawnee Crejas
Inquirer General Intern

CLARK FREEPORT—"Hi, ipisos are good. They have the heart."

Shouting that impression, Ghanaian Jasper Asuwetu left the Philippines on Saturday morning, more than three months after being stranded at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport here since Sept. 20 last year.

That good heart of the Filipino character was imprinted on him by no less than Inquirer readers who came to his aid through their contributions.

In less than two weeks after the 31-year-old Ghanaian ended the business Northern Luzon Bureau on Dec. 26 to seek help, the lyrics-based company PennyTel bought him a plane ticket for his flight home.

The Monday couple said their son, John Ralph Vincent Penny Tan, formerly Go, Hilo-Marvels, Han Lugem and a man who only identified himself as Albert sent him pocket money.

Malou Jose Lucanas, president of Clark International Airport Corp., assigned a staff member, Shelet Bagol, to facilitate the clearances for Asuwetu's release with immigration authorities.

PennyTel paid P11,230 ($1,400) for Asuwetu's one-way ticket to United Arab Emirates flight from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to Accra, Ghana, according to Shelet Sison Cruz, Air India ground operations manager.

It was Mark Anthony Dellia, a Filipino employee of PennyTel seeing here for the holidays, who read Asuwetu's story on Inquirer.net. He forwarded the story to his employers who is a Ghanaian years.

Dellia said his employers lost no time in helping his compatriot.

Cruz handed an electronic ticket to Asuwetu an hour before he left the DMIA at 4 p.m. on Friday. Cruz said an immigration official in Angeles City recorded Asuwetu's departure from the Philippines after clearing him from the deportation list.

The Ghanaian left the country at 12:20 a.m. Saturday.

Gilo and his Asia became part of this erstwhile deportation drama when Asuwetu, who was traveling on that airliner to Malaysia en route to Bangkok and Dubai, was deported by Malaysian authorities on Sept. 20 for lack of a transit visa.

Another attempt to leave the Philippines, this time through Bangkok via Siam on Oct. 18, was frustrated this, again, to lack of a transit visa.

Air Asia had provided him free meals and snacks during his month-long stay at the DMIA terminal and two months more of stay at the airport's Emergency Service Department (ESD).

"He was not only a deportee. He was also guest. He had no country," Cruz said.

Kawesmo came to the Philippines on Feb. 27 to study at a seminary school in Mayor Bindia. He lost financial support when his brother, a seaman, died in an accident. His mother is a responsible resident in Ghana.

He volunteered with the Life Abbot Evangelical Ministry, preaching the Bible at the women's correctional facility in Mayor Bindia.

"I'm very happy to leave and reunite with my mother," Asuwetu said after hugging his father left Clark on Friday.

"For all their kindness, God should reward them. They have been very good, very kind to me," he said, referring to the people who helped him.

Among them, he said, were OMSS Employees who shared food, bedsheets by supplying hope and great love from a batch of Filipino Christians.

More than 50 Filipinos also were there encouraging words through text messages.

"I thank the heavens for coming to my aid to spread the message," he said, "Thanksgiving of blessings, I thank them for the good work they have done to me."

He said he had left behind money for himself.

"Everything is by God. All things work together for the Lord," he said.

Kawesmo promised to return the kind favor of Filipinos.

"I will help Filipinos in the little ways I can when they encounter problems in Ghana," he said.

Kawesmo plans to return to the Philippines to study, thanking on the help of the Bindley couple who owns a school.

Kawesmo is the second Ghanaian rescued in Clark after football players Ayi Ifi Ayayi, who was deported by Singaporean authorities to Clark for six months in 2006 for lack of a student visa.

DEPOSITORS of Rural Bank of Sta. Rita in Pampanga walk as the bank's premises, demanding to get their money after the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas ordered it closed on Jan. 8.
ROBERT V. DELOS SANTOS, INQUIRER

Irate depositors greet PDIC takeover of Pampanga bank

By Tawnee Crejas
Inquirer General Intern

STA. RITA, PAMPANGA—ANXIOUS AND angry depositors met the arrival on Friday of a team sent by the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC) to take over the ailing Rural Bank of Sta. Rita (RBSR) here.

Dozens of clients rushed to the bank minutes after the PDIC team, led by deputy manager Leo Cabrellis, arrived at 9 a.m.

Some of them cried, hooted or threw a barrage of questions:

"Our money is held. How are we going to survive now?" said Leopoldo Lansang, 75. "This is a misfortune," she sobbed.

Gregorio Santos, 74, pressed for answers. Holding deliberate cause from the PDIC people, she cried, pounding machine and fingers, appearing ready to do an inventory of the bank's assets and documents.

Santos said her daughter, who was working in Canada, had several time deposits in the bank.

"She's coming over this," Santos told the bystanders. "She worked hard for her money."

A man walked past, shouting: "Return our money!"

Many were eager to know how to claim insurance payments, and if the P250,000 maximum insurance could be increased. They got no answers.

Cabrellis said his team came only to serve a notice of closure and take over the 45-year-old bank. Another team will process the claims, he said.

Cabrellis failed to serve the closure order of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas through. The owner, Dr. Veneracion de Castro, and other RBSR officials could not be found, he said.

The depositors saw the PDIC team leave at 9:30 a.m., reportedly to look for bank officials or employees. It returned minutes later only to leave at past 10 a.m.

"We're told that they're in Manila. We will try on Monday," said Cabrellis when consulted by phone at 3 p.m.

He said his team came a day after the BSP placed the bank under conservatorship. Pioneer Bank of Bacolod, under PDIC receivership.

According to the BSP's Jan. 8 advisory, the "worst-to-file number. For PDIC to take over the banks' assets to protect the interest of bank depositors and in case processing deposit insurance claims."

Like the PDIC team, depositors found the bank still closed. A huge public notice plastered on its glass door.

This has been the worst time since Dec. 19 when RBSR went on a voluntary holiday so, as it claimed, event paste refurbishment. So far, 13 rural banks across the country have closed.

All RBSR employees will be placed under the supervision of the PDIC, according to Cabrellis.

He said the bank could continue if new investors infused fresh capital or could be found for prominent owners.

Cabrellis said another PDIC team would raise over Rural Bank of Bacolor, also owned by De Castro, possibly today.

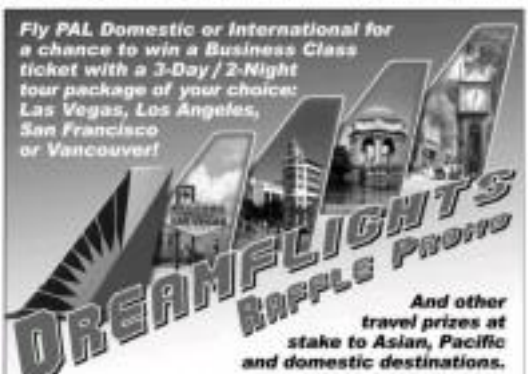
The BSP press statement that "with the exception of these two banks, the rural banking sector in Pampanga has remained strong and healthy."

Twenty other rural banks in Pampanga have a combined asset base of more than P4 billion, deposit base of more than P3 billion and capital accounts of P1.5 billion.

"In a nutshell, these rural banks have consistently recorded healthy double-digit growth rates in deposits mobilized and loans granted between December 2007 and September 2008," the BSP said.

It also advised the public to "avoid making sweeping judgment on the condition of individual banks or to pass on baseless rumors."

De Castro or his daughter, Hale Anne Negat, president of RBR, had not been seen in town since December. Dr. Castro lost in Mayoralty bid in the May 2004 elections.



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Flight Sector: Manila-Cagayan
Flight Date: December 08, 2008

Maria Socorro Nito
Travel Agency: Adventure International Tours, Inc. (Taguig)
Flight No.: PR864
Flight Sector: Cebu-Manila
Flight Date: November 5, 2008

Gemma Cardino
Flight No.: PR852
Flight Sector: Manila-Cebu
Flight Date: December 1, 2008

Samantha Ashley Co
Travel Agency: Fun Pacific Travel (Binondo)
Flight No.: PR730
Flight Sector: Manila-Bangkok
Flight Date: December 23, 2008

Nina Angela Francesca Aldana
Travel Agency: Uni-Orient Travel, Inc. (Binondo)
Flight No.: PR382
Flight Sector: Manila-Hong Kong
Flight Date: November 27, 2008

Ronaldo Mangmang
Travel Agency: Mi-Planes Connect, Inc. (Pasay)
Flight No.: PR177
Flight Sector: Manila-Tagbilaran
Flight Date: November 6, 2008

Robert Valiao
Travel Agency: Bisaya Adventures
Travel Bureau, Inc. (Cantonment)
Flight No.: PR126
Flight Sector: Bantayan-Manila
Flight Date: October 08, 2008

Araceli Fernando
Flight No.: PR618
Flight Sector: Manila-Davao
Flight Date: December 20, 2008

Takamitsu Matsuo
Travel Agency: Philippine Travel & Tours, Inc. (Cebu)
Flight No.: PR658
Flight Sector: Cebu-Manila
Flight Date: December 23, 2008

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Power rationed in Zamboanga, Misamis, Lanao

OZAMIZ CITY—POWER RATIONING is to have across the Zamboanga Peninsula and Misamis Occidental, and to almost half of Lanao del Norte in the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) is prevented by bad weather in doing repair works on its tower that was bombed Saturday dawn.

The blast reached to three areas, comprising over three million people, being cut off from the Mindanao grid which sources power supply mainly from the Agus hydroelectric generation complex in Lanao del Norte.

The damaged power pylon in Barangay Tingin-tingin in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, carries a 138-kilovolt transmission line that connects northwestern Mindanao with the Agus complex through the Aloga switch.

At present, households experience power outage every two hours, an arrangement made since Saturday noon.

Emmanuel Abellanosa, Transco's assistant vice president for Mindanao operations and maintenance, said the power supply distributed throughout the region comes from the Western Mindanao Power Corp.'s power generation plant in Isabgal, Zamboanga City.

It was commissioned into service following the Saturday attack.

But the Isabgal plant can only provide 95 megawatts as against the 350-megawatt power demand of the region, said Avelino Unwin, manager of Transco's Lanao District Office.

Abellanosa had said the power pylon could be restored within two or three days after the start of repair works.

But heavy rains since yesterday prevented repair works, said Bob Martinez, Transco's corporate communications officer in northwestern Mindanao.

Martinez said the military had given clearance yesterday afternoon to Transco's engineering team to enter the area where the downed pylon is located but the repair crew's convoy was stuck in mud as they negotiated the road.

On Sunday morning, Transco accompied to bring emergency restoration system (ERS) materials and crew into the area via a chopper but was prevented again by bad weather.

She said Transco sought to install an emergency structure to temporarily replace the damaged steel tower so that power could begin to be wheeled into the transmission line's carries.

Martinez added that the company's crew would be undertaking repair works under tight security by military and police.

Ayan D. Rosauro, Inquirer Mindanao

STREET DANCE COMPETITION
THE 7th Hinugyaw (Thanksgiving) Festival on Saturday in Koronadal City, South Cotabato showcased the talents of different groups performing indigenous dances and wearing their costumes in the city.

NEWSBRIEFS

■ CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY

2 dead in shooting

TWO PERSONS died while six others were hurt in a shooting incident at a cockpit in Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija, on Saturday morning.

Chief Insp. Reynaldo dela Cruz, Sta. Rosa police chief, said Rodolfo Salibad, 41, of Balangan, and Reynaldo Dalisay, 36, of this city, died in the incident at 1:30 a.m. Dela Cruz said Investigators were establishing who were involved in the shooting, which he said appeared to be an argument over an unpaid bet during a cockfight at the town's cockpit arena in Barangay Salubat.

Analiza Rapay, Inquirer Central Luzon

■ TUGUEGARAO CITY

No washing in Cagayan River

THE PROVINCIAL board approved an ordinance that bans the washing of vehicles and clothes in the Cagayan River and its tributaries.

Provincial officials said the ban will keep the cleanliness of the Cagayan River and its tributaries because used oil and gasoline pollute motors and cause corrosion in the fuel system.

The board also approved a proposal to ban for the development of the Cagayan River basin, a government project.

Estrelador Cabiles, Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ LAGUNA

Dolphy grandson held

A GRANDSON of comedy king Dolphy was arrested for possession of unlicensed firearms on Thursday evening, a police report said Saturday.

Laguna police chief Senior Supt. Marcelito Labuste said Rodolfo Quizon III, 25, was arrested at around 10:30 p.m. in Poly's Bistro in Barangay Poblacion Dos, Pagsanjan.

Reclusted from his son-in- Ali-Quizon Mill, a suspected of the gun violations. Police filed charges of illegal possession of firearms against him.

Marlon Otico, Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ NUEVA, CAYETE

3 bodies found dumped

THREE unidentified male bodies, around 30 to 40 years old, were found near a secretary here.

Their eyes were covered with packaging tape and their mouths were gagged with nylon cords.

Residents found the bodies past 6 a.m. at a vacant lot on Filio Symeon Road, Magsan 2-D.

Erika Zuarte

■ ALBAY

Suspected rebs bomb cellsite

A CELLSITE of Globe Telecoms was bombed by suspected New People's Army rebels on Thursday in Malilipot town.

Police said 40 unidentified heavily armed men pointed guns at the security guard, forced him to open the gate, and dragged him 15 meters away from the cellsite.

The bomb exploded after 10 minutes but the security guard was unharmed. The perpetrators fled towards Barangay Binitagan, police added.

Lakran Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Taiwanese gunned down

A TAIWANESE executive of a cement factory in Camalig, Albay was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen Tuesday, the Bicol police said.

The victim, identified as Lin Shih Ying, 38, assistant marketing supervisor of the Goodfound Cement Corp., was at the company's quarry site when the gunmen shot him.

Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ LANAO DEL NORTE

Floods hit Lanao villages

FLOODING blamed on what residents called widespread submerged three coastal villages here on Thursday, Vice Mayor Princesa Diangkalan said.

Chairing over the waterspouts occurred amid "lightning strikes."

He said residents of Barangay Magcong found a roaring sound around 1:30p.m. before waters submerged their village. Barangay Santiago too and part of the Poblacion area.

Chang said the water reached depths of five feet and residents had to flee.

In 1980, a similar incident occurred in this town, killing seven people. *Rachel Dael, Inquirer Mindanao*

■ STA. CRUZ, DAVAO DEL SUR

3 cops die in collision

THREE police officers from Caraga region were killed when the patrol car they were riding in collided with a cargo truck in Barangay Balis here early morning Friday.

Insp. Rodrigo Tungol, town police chief, said the policemen were on their way to Pilot, North Cotabato from Butuan City when the accident happened at past 2 a.m.

Among those instantly killed were Insp. Jerome Tio, company commander of the 14th police Caraga mobile group, and a PO1 de Vera. PO2 Nicolas Guarino, who was driving the patrol vehicle, died while being treated at a hospital in Davao City, Tungol said. *Orlando Olivo, Inquirer Mindanao*

■ TAGUM CITY

Fake dentist arrested

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation arrested on Wednesday an alleged fake dentist during an entrapment operation in Mabini, Compostela Valley.

Ms. Angelina Bedaya, who was arrested, based on a complaint by Dr. Celso Cervantes, did not submit a proof.

NBI agent Hermenegildo Ely Lastin said the suspect yielded dentistry equipment and medicines. *Arlanzon Lim, Inquirer Mindanao*

Cop hailed for stopping P1.6-M robbery try

By Felipa V. Cobina
Inquirer Visayas

BOHOL CITY—THE CITY COUNCIL COMmended a policeman for foiling members about to take the P1.6-million Christmas bonanza of teachers of a public high school.

In a resolution passed on Thursday, the council said PO1 Ocmopet Avelino went beyond the call of duty when, while on off-duty on Dec. 22, chased the snatchers, stopped them from fleeting with the money and got hurt in the process.

The resolution also commended city police chief Senior Insp. Leo Rendon and his men.

Avelino, 33, rescued pennies from his students, teachers from the Cogon National High School (CNHS), residents and friend of friends.

The policeman has been in the service for six years. It was the first time he responded to a crime incident, the city council noted.

As a result of Avelino's action, the police were able to arrest three suspects and charged them last week with robbery with malversation and physical injuries for the attempt to snatch the Christmas bonanza of teachers from the CNHS amounting to P1,600,712 on Dec. 22, 2008.

Charged before the city prosecutor's office (CPO) were the Rendin Rebol, 33, and his brother Hyan, 25, both of Sambak Pinamgopan, Inayo, and Roy de los Reyes, 34, of Dampas.

The school's cashier Robyn Villegas and paymaster head Erlinda Bravo came from the Land Bank of the Philippines after cashing their bonus check and were 50 meters near the school gate when three men blocked the path of the tricycle they were riding.

One of the robbers tried to snatch the bag from Villegas who was at the right sidecar of the tricycle, but the bag fell on the ground. Instead of picking up the bag, the men took the other handbag of villegas.

Tanaes immediately picked up the bag and ran fast inside the school premises while the robbers frantically fled on a getaway motorcycle toward Villamor Stadium.

Sideswept to them, the bag picked up by Tanaes contained the bonuses of the teachers while the bag snatched from Villegas contained small amounts of cash and other documents.

Avelino, who happened to pass along the area on a motorcycle, immediately fled his .45 cal. service pistol as warning, but the robbers shot back two times before fleeting toward the Villamor Stadium. Avelino followed the robbers until they reached the Land Transportation Office in Mahipayon Village.

He bumped into the motorcycle of the robbers, but this caused his vehicle to swerve and hit a garbage truck parked on the roadside.

Avelino lost consciousness from injuries to the head, nose, and leg. There of his ribs were broken.

One of the robbers approached Avelino and picked up the policeman's gun and squeezed the trigger several times at him.

Puno: Keep hands off judiciary

Kabayan Ki

President Macapagal-Arroyo, the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

Kampi is set to meet next month if the despedidahan over against Negros Oriental Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong, who is accused of not being a natural-born Filipino citizen.

"We will give Atty. Herbert Bautista Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras) the time of day in Kampi. We will transmit to the party what transpired in the case involving his wife (who was disbarred by Limkaichong in 2007)," said Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez. Both Suarez and Paras are ranking members of Kampi.

"If it is impossible, we will support it," Suarez said.

Justices of the Supreme Court, like the Ombudsman and top officials of the Commission on Elections, can be removed from office only through impeachment, which requires the vote of one-third of the 237-member House of Representatives. Once approved by the House, the articles of impeachment go to the Senate for trial.

Charter change

A second justice said there were reports that moves were afoot to impeach Puno to pave the way for a Supreme Court that would allow Charter change (Cha-cha).

"The President will appoint seven new justices to the 15-member Supreme Court to take the place of those out to retire this year, a development that will leave only Puno as the only member of the Arroyo not appointed by Ms Arroyo.

Allies of Ms Arroyo in the House, especially Kampi stalwarts like the President's son Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, are pushing for Cha-cha through a constituent assembly (Con-Ass) in which Congress votes as one body and not as two separate chambers.

Kampi's claim that Congress could vote as one body on Cha-cha, an interpretation rejected by senators, who believe that the House and the Senate should vote separately on the issue, is expected to be elevated to the Supreme Court.

Threat real

Former Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said that Malacañang or its allies pushing for Cha-cha could be behind moves to oust Puno.

Drilon said Justice Puno did not have the chair to mount such a move all by himself. Malacañang said it had no hand in moves to oust Puno. (See story on 6th page.)

Sen. Francis Pangilinan, a member of the Liberal Party (LP) like Drilon, said he was told by his sources in the Supreme Court that the threat to oust Puno was "real" and "serious."

Pangilinan said he said Senator Kotty Supreme would dredge "on a later and proper time" those behind the plot.

"We are warning those behind this move that we will not stop until they are exposed and their devious schemes defeated," he said in a text message.

Bantay Konstitusyon is a coalition of legal luminaries from the academe, law groups and the Makati Business Club that is calling for "transparency" in the selection and appointment of seven members to the Supreme Court.

Vigilance

Pangilinan said he would take up the matter when Bantay from Supreme, of which he is a convenor, marches today for a general assembly "and we'll be legal community can come up with a united response against this latest attack on the Supreme Court and the rule of law."

"In the meantime, we urge the greatest vigilance from the public at this time to protect the office of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from the said attack," he said.

Like Pangilinan, Drilon said he heard from "legal circles" more than a week ago that there would be an impeachment case to be filed against Puno.

Drilon, LP chair and former justice secretary, said Puno, whose wife may benefit from the promulgation of the supposed high court resolution, "doesn't have the clout to be able to muster a credible impeachment complaint against the Chief Justice."

"Only Malacañang has that clout and it fits perfectly into their plans on the extraordinary assembly (Con-Ass)," he said.

Part of grand scheme

Noting the entire move was "part of a grand scheme," Drilon said the Palace now the opportunity to "keep (Puno) off balance because of the appointees he will not vote the line needed so Charter change is concluded."

Drilon said "reliable sources" told him the Palace would push for Charter by getting first the House to get the signatures of 107 lawmakers on proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution "to precipitate a case in the Supreme Court on the issue of joint or separate voting of Congress."

"Then is why the Supreme Court becomes a critical factor in the next 12 to 18 months because they are all conscious the political history of this country," he said.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo said an impeachment case against Puno would be a serious blow to the independence of the three branches of government and the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary.

But Ocampo said he didn't think Malacañang would succeed in a mission tied to Cha-cha because strong public opinion would frustrate it.

Playing with fire

Akbayan Mayor Joemar Ilang presidential of the United Opposition, said administration allies would be "playing with fire" if they pushed through with removing Puno to extend the term of Ms Arroyo, who is set to step down in 2010.

Those resulting to impeach Puno were to "big trouble" if they executed common "beyond reproach in his value system and conduct," said Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz.

It is clubbiness, Cruz said: "Filipinos are, by and large, patient and forgiving. But even long-sleeping volcanoes can and do erupt. This is a fair warning."

The Supreme Court spokesperson said the court move "is really totally baseless and refuses nothing for the degradation of the integrity of the court."

"So fundamental is the sealed value that the integrity and orderly functioning of the administration of justice should be maintained at all times," Marquez said in his text message. PDR reports from Allison B. Lopez in Manila and Fidencio Sotelo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

More Sports on A27-A30

Late SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa
E-mail ...

Beermen barrel past Kings, reach s'finals

By Marc...

TALK ABOUT A GREAT COMEBACK AND SAN MIGUEL BEER JUST MADE THE PRAYS promoted comes from behind team is fortunate to the wake of its magnificent escape last night.

The Beermen rested back from as many as 21 points down in the third quarter to nip the Barangay Ginebra San Kings, 98-95, and claim the Final Four of the 85th Philippine Cup.

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Bail set for cabbie in UST coed's case

Court rules evidence against driver 'not strong'

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A TAXI DRIVER ACCUSED OF ROBBING AND KIDNAPPING AN 18-year-old girl has been allowed to post bail.

In a resolution dated Dec. 22, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 85 Judge Filoteemon Ringpis said the evidence against Primitivo Sarmiento was weak.

"After assessment, the court finds that evidence of guilt is not strong," the judge said. She set the bail for the taxi driver's temporary liberty at P200,000.

Sarmiento was charged with rape, serious illegal detention and kidnapping last year after he allegedly robbed Valerie (not her real name), a University of Santo Tomas student, on Nov. 22.

In her complaint, Valerie said she flagged down a KIA taxi cab with plate number TMC 897 and asked the driver, whom the police later identified as Sarmiento, to take her home in Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City.

When they got there, the victim said she gave the suspect a P1,000 bill. He claimed, however, that the guy/she only P64 for her fare. When they started arguing, Sarmiento drove off with her still inside the taxi cab. Valerie said she escaped by jumping out of the cab, sustaining injuries in the process.

Sarmiento was arrested in his house in Malolos, Quezon City, on Dec. 1 after the police received a tip from a concerned citizen. Several other victims who claimed to be his victims later surfaced and vowed to file charges against him.

According to the judge, there was no evidence to show that the accused meant to willfully kidnap the complainant.

"What appears from the narration of both prosecution witnesses is that the accused fled from the scene not with any purpose to kidnap the complainant but (with) the intent of absconding [with] the complainant's P1,000," Ringpis said.

BUSTED ROAD

Andrew M. Jovenes, 27, of New Manila, Quezon City, writes: "Mayor Sonny Belmonte, please instruct your engineering office to work on the damaged street of Broadway corner M. Domingo. Whenever it rains, the street gets flooded because the drainage system is clogged. As a result, there are a lot of potholes and motorists passing by the area need to slow down, causing heavy traffic."

Sidewalks for pedestrians, not motorcycles

THE TERMINAL in Sisquio Avenue in Barangay Veara, Quezon City, has been turned into a parking lot where delivery men of fastfood restaurants and messengers of a security agency park their motorcycles.

ROBERTO PANGILINAN, JR.
Project 8, Quezon City

Narrow road in Caloocan City

CALLING the attention of Barangay Hulong Duhat. Ang aking isa ng daanan papalabas ng subdivision ng Barangay Tanza, magkapag pa-up nga pasensya ang mga vendors on both sides of the road. Masikip na, dadalasan pa ito ng Barangay Tanza, the road after the bridge has become narrower. There are vendors occupying both sides of the road. Not only has it become narrower, it is also full of trash.)

JASMINE ABELLA-BAUTISTA, 28
Caloocan City

Busted lamppost in Quezon City

THERE are two busted light posts between Blumentritt and Lealtad Streets. I hope the MMDA can check it. Thanks.

ADEL, 47, Marikina, Quezon City

Desperate call for help

ZIGUAY na ang kalsadangan sa dingin at sa kadiliman ng mga poste. Ayaw na ito kasi ng mga tulong kung minsan ang mga pulis at ang mga barangay opisyal sa pare mga taong (People in our area are becoming hooked on alcohol and drugs. We don't ask for help if the police are dead and the barangay officials are all drunks!) Please help.

MIKKEL, 34, Brgy. 19 Kayo, Sangandaan, Caloocan City

Amateur historian recalls the Wack Wack of old

By Dodo Fuerte-Bagtayo
Contributor

MIGUEL "MIKE" ARANCETA, 82, vividly remembers the way it was at Wack Wack Golf and Country Club and its surroundings. After all, he has been its neighbor since 1964 and has an immense love of learning about it.

As curator of his father's papers and memorabilia occupying a major portion of Mike's house on 1,000 sq m of prime real estate on Lee Street, Barangay Wack Wack in Mandaluyong City, the amateur historian is a proud recipient of a veritable treasure trove of books, documents and newspaper clippings of his family's rich history.

An Ateneo de Manila graduate (Bachelor of Arts in Social Science and Journalism), Mike is the youngest of the six sons of Benito Buencamino y Quitoriano of Iloilo, Iloilo, who was chief justice of the Supreme Court from 1920 to 1941. An older brother, Albert, was the son-in-law of President Manuel L. Quezon.

"He was the first journalism graduate of Ateneo," said Mike, who retired in 1998 as assistant to the General Bank governor.

"My father began playing golf in the club in 1932, two years after it was founded by a prominent Ateneo accountant, William J. Shaw of the resurrection company ACSAP (Asiatic Gulf & Pacific Co.)," recalled Mike. "He was a jolly fellow, always greeting us boys whenever he saw us. I remember Mr. Shaw would organize big family affairs like Easter egg hunts for members, complete with magicians."

The reminders were first living on Gonzaga Street in Pasay City near St. Scholastica's College. "Papa would bring us to the golf course early in the morning to watch him and teach us how to play the game," said Mike. He also mentioned the other justices to play golf there. He would organize tournaments just for justices. Later, he decided to buy a lot in Wack Wack on installment basis. In a period of time, he was able to buy a total of 11 lots. The plan then was something like 20 centavos per square meter."

Mike is the only one in the family who has stayed on at Barangay Wack Wack. "All of my brothers eventually sold their houses and transferred to either Makati or Greenhills," he said.

"While I was building our house with Vic Santiago as our architect in 1964," continued Mike, "an old tsuji driver who brought me there said that part of Wack Wack used to be a rugby field. True enough, the carpenters unearthed an old grinding stone for sugar cane on my lot. It was so heavy it took 10 men to carry it to the area that is now my garden."

Mike has fond memories of the old Wack Wack. "I live just beside the Fernández Creek, and when it was clean, my grandsons used to swim there," he said. "Now, you won't even dip your toe in the water. The creek marks the boundary of the west side of Wack Wack, crosses Pilares and comes out in the San Juan River. Our barangay main arch effort to clean the river."

A true star in the golden house which he shares with his wife of 56 years, Mary Josefin, and their family, is like going inside a mini-house. A bust of Chief Justice Araneta greets visitors at the entrance.

The presence of "uncle" crowned in the bath area is the reason why it was named Shell.

Mirth, understood the old-timer. "I called my place a unisanctuary because of the presence of various types of birds, like the 'mudi' which I used to see in flocks in the late 50s."

Huge trees and ornamentals are found inside his yard, providing one a cool retreat in the summer heat. There is a rockery-type, grassy hangout for our Lapus, a yellow flamgo and chair of Lapus Group Foundation Inc., who also lives in the subdivision. "We are part of Barangay Wack Wack, which is just outside the exclusive subdivision," said Mike.

A frequent visitor to the golf course while he was growing up, Mike has seen the changes at Wack Wack Golf and Country Club, considered one of the best golf courses in the world and established as an exclusive sheer, pleasing course. An annual report of the club dated 1968 gives its address as Quezon City although it is now under the jurisdiction of Mandaluyong City.

Among the Aranceta heirlooms, Mike admits that the best gallery in the family was Alberto, the husband of Nini Quezon, who almost became the amateur golf champion.

By 1960, Mike's eldest boy, Jesus, became a proprietary member of the club, Alberto, an associate member. Mario, a playing member, and Nini, a member of the Ladies' Chapter. Today Mike is no longer a member, having sold his membership for what he described as "a pittance." The cost of membership today is in the millions of pesos.

Mike also remembers Tio No. 7, the site of an attempt on the life of President Jose P. Laurel. With his knack for remembering facts and historical data, he recalled the events: "The gunman was eventually captured, and taken by the police straight to the Philippine General Hospital where Laurel was recuperating from his wounds, the Japanese soldiers escorting the shooter asked Laurel if he recognized him. 'I don't know him. I never saw him in my life,' Laurel said."

That statement, said Mike, saved the life of the gunman. Years later, the shooter, known as "Little Joe," went to the old Laurel home on Pedro Gil in Ermita to Paco, Manila, knelt down before the former President and asked his forgiveness. He was forgiven and even became Laurel's bodyguard, said Mike.

The amateur historian also remembers the caddies that came and went, one of them the controversial Benjamin Abalos, who later became Mandaluyong City mayor and chair of the Commission on Elections.

"Mr. Abalos was then a working student enrolled in a Law course and was a caddie in his spare time when my brothers used him," said Mike. "The mayor would later become president of the golf club."

Of the six Aranceta brothers, only three are still living. There is now a thick cement wall blocking the view of the creek and the golf course from Mike's house. The last time he was inside the club's premises was four years ago.

But Mike does not seem to mind at all. After all, he said, his golfing days are over.

A BUST of Mike's father, former Chief Justice Ramon Aranceta, is the first thing visitors see at the Aranceta' house.

A HOLE IN ONE at Tee No. 7 where a man tried to shoot President Jose Laurel in June 1943. Laurel survived the incident and even forgave his assailant.

ARANCETA shows an old grinding stone which carpenters dug up on his property. The tree used to be a sugar cane field.

ARANCETA has seen the changes over the years at Wack Wack Golf and Country Club, having been its neighbor since 1964.

Group gathers signatures to halt landfill construction

By DJ Yap

A PETITION IS CIRCULATING in San Mateo, Rizal, in a bid to derail the construction of a landfill in a forested part of the town, which would purportedly become the dumping ground of a portion of Metro Manila's garbage.

"We, the people of San Mateo, Rizal, and local officials and members of organizations and groups concerned with the protection of the environment, the health of people, and the development of communities conducive to healthy lifestyles and the future of our children, oppose the construction of a dump in Barangay Maly, Barangay Guinayang and any part of San Mateo," part of the petition read.

The Coalition to for a Garbage-Free San Mateo, a newly formed group, is seeking to block the proposed construction of a 200-hectare landfill in the two barangays which the group said would "rival the infamous Payatas garbage dump" in Quezon City.

It said the landfill would be used as the dumping ground of wastes from the town, neighboring municipalities and even Metro Manila, which used to dump its garbage in the existing San Mateo landfill until the Supreme Court ordered it shut in 2000.

EcoWaste Coalition and Greenpeace are also opposed to the project, which they said is located in an environmentally critical area since it is linked to the Marikina watershed and drains into the Laguna Lake.

In the petition, the group enumerated what it called irregularities in the construction of the dump, including the alleged violations of a Local Government Code provision requiring prior consultation with affected local communities "before a national project that affects the environmental and ecological balance of local communities can be implemented."

"No public consultations or hearings have been made in Maly and Guinayang, and many of the residents of these barangays are not even aware that a dump is being built right in their midst," the petition said.

The group added that all permits processed by the contractors, including the environmental compliance certificate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, were obtained earlier for Pasong Makiling, and not for Maly and Guinayang.

"And all of these permits, by virtue of the 2005 decision order by the Supreme Court, are now null and void and may not be used to legalize the construction of a dump anywhere else," it said.

The group said the initial phase of the landfill would be built on a 10-hectare area in Barangay Guinayang but would later be expanded to 200 hectares of land covering "almost one-half of the 470 hectare area designated as Protected Forest Area by the Land Use Plan of San Mateo."

"We will not sit to silence and let our rights be trampled upon. We will not let the health of our children and families be endangered. We will not let our environment, our livelihood, and the peace of our communities be destroyed," it added.

MetroBriefs

Robbers strike in Pasay

ROBBERS struck two condominium unit in Pasay City on Saturday and took more than P300,000 in cash and valuables. Case investigator PO2 Giovanni Arcinas said the incident was reported by the owners, Antonio Valdez, 37, a businessman and resident of Central Park Condominium Tower 1 on E. Jorge Street. According to Valdez, he came home from work on Saturday evening to find that his front door had been forced open. He said he had secured P150,000 in cash, a video camera worth P45,000 and P80,000 worth of jewelry.

Alex Mosura

Teenager shot dead

A TEENAGER was shot to his arm walking his girlfriend home on Saturday night. Narciso Calubaquib, 18, of 1457 Sampaloc St. in Tondo, died while undergoing treatment at the Mary Johnston Hospital, where he was brought by his girlfriend, Jenica Espinosa, of Tagpuan City. SPO3 Edgardo Ricafort of the Manila Police District homicide section said the two were walking at the corner of Recinto Zamora and Peñalosa streets in Tondo when a shot rang out and the victim slumped to the ground.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Makati City gov't all set for Caracol Festival on Jan. 18

DID YOU KNOW

THE NAME Quiapo came from "cuyapo," a kind of wax. Its cabbage-like sap was abundant in the area.

Cyrill Abubakra
Inquirer Research

By Allison W. Lapus

NEARLY TWO WEEKS AFTER its grand New Year's countdown party, Makati is preparing for another big celebration—its very own Carnival Festival—the city's version of Rio de Janeiro's Mardi Gras, on Jan. 18.

"The annual celebration of Caracol is part of the city government's continuing commitment to preserve our cultural heritage and promote the importance of preserving and conserving our environment and natural resources," Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay said.

Hundreds of costumed, floral-adorned public schools in the city will take part in the festivity which will include a carnival and dance contest.

The highlight of the celebration, however, will be the grand parade featuring participants dressed in Mother Earth-inspired costumes.

In previous years, students taking part in the parades were dressed up as flowers, insects, animals or fairies.

The parade will start at 4 p.m. parade at the Gabriela Silang Corridor in Ayala and Makati Avenues and will end on Buendia Pasong.

Caracol was conceptualized in 1996 and kicked off the Fiesta Islands Program of the Department of Tourism in 1999.

"The festival is aimed to instill ing respect for Mother Earth in people and making them active participants in environmental conservation.

McCAIN: "They have an disregard for humanity."—or Bush for grammar.

US rejected secret Israel plea to bomb Iran nuclear complex

NEW YORK—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush deflected Israel's secret request last year for bunker-busting bombs it wanted for an attack on Iran's main nuclear complex, saying he had unchecked power action to sabotage Tehran's suspected atomic weapons development, The New York Times said.

Citing US and foreign officials, the Times reported on Saturday the White House was unable to determine whether Israel had decided to carry out the strike before Washington objected or whether Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was trying to get Bush to act more decisively before he leaves office this month.

Israel, widely believed to have the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, bombed the site of a suspected nuclear reactor in Syria in 2007.

Details of the expanded US covert program and the Bush administration's efforts to talk Israel out of attacking Iran emerged from 15 months of interviews with current and former US officials, international nuclear inspectors, outside experts and foreign and Israeli officials, the Times said.

None of those interviewed would speak on the record, the paper said, adding it omitted many details of the covert effort from its report at the request of senior US intelligence and military officials.

It said the interviews also suggested that while Mr Bush was extensively briefed on options for an overt American attack on Iran's facilities, he never instructed the Pentagon to move beyond contingency planning, even during the final year of his presidency, contrary to what some critics have suggested."

But aware that financial sanctions against Iran were inadequate, Bush turned to the CIA, according to people involved in the covert program, authorizing a broader effort aimed at Iran's industrial infrastructure supporting its nuclear programs, the Times said.

While the paper said details were closely held by US officials, it quoted one as saying, "It was not until the last year that they got really imaginative about what else could do to screw up the system."

But the official said "none of these are game-changers" in that the efforts would not necessarily cripple Iran's program.

Under Bush, whose comments on Jan. 28 when Barack Obama becomes president, the United States has sought tougher UN sanctions against Iran or halt its nuclear program, which Western nations believe is designed for making weapons.

Iran, which often unleashes virulent rhetoric against Israel, insists its nuclear program is for civilian purposes.

The Times said some Bush administration officials remained skeptical of the covert program's chances of success given what one said was Iran's proximity to undercutting weapons capacity.

Others held that Israel would not have been dissuaded from attacking if they believed the US effort was unlikely to prove effective, the paper said. Reuters

Bushisms over the years: What not to teach the kids

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH will leave behind a legacy of Bushisms, the label stamped on his original speaking style. Some of the more notable quotations and mangled statements:

+ "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully." —September 2000, explaining his energy policies at an event in Michigan.

+ "Words is the greatest asset, is one children learning?" —January 2000, during a campaign event in South Carolina.

+ "They misunderestimated the competence of our country. I think they misunderestimated the will and determination of the commander in chief, too." —Sept. 26, 2001, in Langley, Virginia. Bush was referring to the terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11 attacks.

+ "There's no doubt in my mind, but one doubt in my mind, that we will fail." —Oct. 4, 2000, in Washington. Bush was remarking on a back-to-work plan after the terrorist attacks.

+ "It would be a mistake for the United States Senate to allow any kind of human cloning to come out of that chamber." —April 10, 2002, at the White House, as Bush urged Senate passage of a broad ban on cloning.

Rodweiler

+ "I want to thank the dozens of Rodweiler too much earlier, the artist and caregivers of people who made the Brit and welcome committee to work hard to endeavor themselves." —April 16, 2002, at the White House.

+ "There's an old saying in Tennessee—I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee—that says, fool me once, shame on—shame on you. Fool me—you can't get fooled again." —Sept. 17, 2002, in Nashville, Tennessee.

+ "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." —Aug. 5, 2004, at the signing ceremony for a defense spending bill.

+ "Too many good docs are getting out of business. Too many Ob-GYNs aren't able to practice their love with women all across this country." —Sept. 6, 2004, at a rally in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

Vision heard

+ "Our most abundant energy source is wind. The more we use coal to last for 250 years, yet coal also presents an environmental challenge." —April 30, 2005, in Washington.

+ "We look forward to hearing your vision, so we can more better do our job." — Sept. 30, 2005, in Gulfport, Mississippi.

+ "I can't wait to join you in the joy of welcoming neighbors back into neighborhoods, and small businesses up and running, and renting those ribbons that somebody is creating new jobs." — Sept. 5, 2005, when Bush met with residents of Hopkinville, Mississippi, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina."

+ "It was not always a given that the United States and Australia would have a close relationship. After all, 60 years we were at war 50 years ago we were at war." — June 20, 2006, at the White House, where Bush met with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

Talking to the dead

+ "Make no mistake about it, I understand how tough it is. As I talk to families who die." — Dec. 7, 2006, in a joint appearance with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

+ "There are big achievements for this country, and the people of Bulgaria ought to be proud of the achievements that they have achieved." — June 11, 2007, in Sofia, Bulgaria.

+ "Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your introduction. Thank you for being such a fine—for being the Oyster normal." —September 2007, in Sydney, Australia, where Bush was attending an Apec summit.

+ "Thank you, Your Holiness. Awesome speech." April 16, 2008, at a ceremony welcoming Pope Benedict XVI in the White House.

+ "The fact that they purchased the machine meant somebody had to make the machine. And when somebody makes a machine, it means there's jobs at the machine-making place." —May 27, 2008, in Mesa, Arizona.

No disregard

+ "And they have no disregard for human life." —July 31, 2008, at the White House. Bush was referring to enemy fighters in Afghanistan.

+ "I remember meeting a mother of a child who was murdered by the North Korean right here in the Oval Office." —June 26, 2008, during a Rose Garden news briefing.

+ "The people in Louisiana and Texas that all across our country there's a lot of prayer—prayer for those whose lives have been turned upside down. And I'm one of them. It's good to come down here." —Sept. 3, 2008, at an emergency operations center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, after Hurricane "Gustav" hit the Gulf Coast.

+ "This then—took a while to then. It's going to take a while to continue." —Oct. 16, 2008, in Alexandria, Louisiana, as he discussed the economy and frozen credit markets.

Sri Lanka says Tigers on brink of defeat

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA—MERU FAMEEDEEN Hussengfen was 301 Lanka's military died in the early 1990s, he tried to buy desperately needed weapons from Russia to fight the Tamil Tiger rebels. Money was no deal he offered: cocaine, machine-gun arms.

The 301 Lankan Embassy rejected the deal, Wanasinghe says. Then, three years ago, a new president took office and the coffers burst open.

Military recruitment swelled, training improved and hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on new hardware to crush the rebels and end a civil war that claimed 25 years and killed more than 70,000 people on this teardrop-shaped island off India's southern tip.

"The sky is the limit. Whatever the country can afford, they get," Wanasinghe said.

Senior officials, analysts, diplomats and former military officers say President Mahinda Rajapaksa's commitment to the fight—coupled with a string of miscalculations by the Tamil Tigers—has brought one of the world's most sophisticated rebel groups to the brink of defeat.

In recent weeks, government forces have broken through the rebels' three lines, forced them out of much of their de facto state in the north and cornered them in a shrinking pocket of northeastern jungle.

Top officials predict the imminent demise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and its dream of creating a breakaway state for the country's ethnic Tamil minority in the north and east.

If Sri Lanka succeeds, it could signal the end of one of Asia's most persistent and bloody insurgencies. But a lasting peace will depend on whether the 75 percent Sinhalese majority on the island of 20 million people can come to a political compromise with the Tamils.

The Tamils have long felt the government, dominated by the Sinhalese, has discriminated against them, their culture and their language.

Rajapaksa has said he would seek a political resolution to the ethnic conflict once the rebels were destroyed. But Sinhalese nationalist politicians have already said with victory in sight there was no need for the sort of power-sharing arrangement seen as crucial to placating the Tamils and preventing a new outbreak of violence.

By some estimates, the retreating rebels still have as many as 10,000 hardcore cadres and another 10,000 reservists still ready to fight.

Iqbal Athas, a military analyst for Jane's Defense Weekly, cautions against declaring an early victory. "The war is not yet over," he said. "It could be protracted."

Some of the insurgents would take off their uniforms, blend in with the mass of civilians, still living in their strongholds and fight on as guerrillas, said Austin Fernando, a former defense secretary.

The war first led to the murder of a former Indian prime minister enjoyed in 1991 after a rebel ambush in the northern Tamil city of Jaffna killed 13 soldiers. Vengeful Sinhalese mobs rampaged through the capital Colombo, leaving more than 2,000 Tamils dead, according to human rights groups. AP

A PHOTOGRAPH of the chief editor of Sri Lanka's Sunday Leader newspaper Lasantha Wickrematunge at his home in an Jan. 11. Sri Lanka's opposition has blamed the government for the killing of the editor, a staunch critic of the war against Tamil rebels and a crusader against corruption. —AP

Russia set to resume EU gas supply after deal

MOSCOW—RUSSIA AND Ukraine prepared on Sunday to restart gas supplies to the European Union after a deal was signed on deploying international monitors to help stifle-cute in Moscow and Kiev's gas conflict.

The row erupt was set by a resumption of supplies by the EU's largest foreign gas provider Russia after chaotic diplomacy by Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek secured both sides' agreement to the deployment of monitors.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin earlier said supplies to the EU would resume "immediately" after the monitors began work, although he warned Ukraine that Moscow "will not tolerate theft" of its gas.

Ukraine's Prime Yanukhovych Boris Tymoshenko said an end to the cut-off was in sight but predicted EU states would in future unite to lessen dependence on Russian gas, mooning a resurgence of nuclear power and the use of other gas sources in North Africa and Central Asia.

From tomorrow, Gazprom's gas transit to the European Union could be resumed and the gas rate will again become a propaganda one," Yanukhovych said.

The EU will undoubtedly try to find ways of reducing dependence on Russian suppliers and avoiding such crises in future," the paper said, predicting a push to develop a proposed pipeline from Central Asia known as "Nabucco."

After Moscow and Kiev's agreement to re-link Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg said it would be possible for Russian gas flows to the EU resume later on Sunday, although EU officials have said it could take three days to restore gas supplies to full volume.

Russia's gas crisis has taken a heavy toll on a domestic economy reliably in control. Europe and the Balkans, leaving thousands of homes in several countries without heat and forcing factories, schools and public facilities to close. AFP

'The Haunting of Molly Hartley' Horror Movie for the '*Gossip Girl*' crowd

Jeannette Catsoulis/The New York Times

"The devil is coming for you!" screams Molly Hartley's mom the day Molly reached her 18th birthday.

Cool now! Satan fight it out for the soul of a troubled girl in this chilling addition to the religion-inspired horror genre tailored for the Tuesday CW generation: lead even stars the show's heads, Chace Crawford.

After her mother has a breakdown, Molly moves to a private school.

Evil lurks everywhere on campus and every night she is haunted by dark visions of the devil. There are also the mean girls and the not-so-friendly faculty that makes her life miserable. Later she gets the attention of the school's most popular jock kid Joseph (Crawford) and fell in love with him. Will he save her or destroy her?

"The Haunting of Molly Hartley" stars Gossip Girl' hunk Chace Crawford and sexy teen idol Haley Bennett.

3rd exec detained in India fraud scandal

RAMALINGA Raju

NEW DELHI—INDIAN POLICE arrested the chief financial officer and two other executives of Satyam Computer Services Ltd. on Saturday, the third executive to be charged in a massive fraud scandal that threatens to rock India's flourishing tech industry.

The arrest of Vadlamani Srinivas, former chief financial officer, comes as authorities try to unravel the $1 billion fraud scandal by dissolving the company's board, including the interim head, and announcing plans to name 10 new replacements.

The scandal broke on Wednesday when Satyam's founder and former chair, B Ramalinga Raju, confessed to falsifying the company's balance sheets with "fictitious" assets and "nonexistent" cash in an extraordinary letter to the company's board.

The company—which is now fighting for its life—could no longer conceal the $1 billion hole after a deal intended to save the struggling company was abandoned. Raju said in his letter.

He resigned from Satyam—Sanskrit for "truth"—then dug along with his brother, former managing director B. Rama Raju. The siblings have been arrested and were charged on Saturday with criminal conspiracy, forgery, criminal breach of trust and falsifying documents, said senior police official V.V.L. Narasaih. They face up to life in prison, he said. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Ducoy

Israeli troops push deeper into Gaza

GAZA CITY—ISRAELI TROOPS AND ARMOR pushed deeper into Gaza's main city on Sunday, sending panicked Palestinian civilians into flight, after Israel warned it would step up its war on Hamas which remained defiant.

As the two sides battled on, ignoring world pleas to stop the 16-day-old war that has killed more than 800 people, Egypt was keeping up efforts to broker a truce in Israel's deadliest ever assault on the impoverished Gaza Strip.

Clutching babies and toddlers and carrying small bundle-packed bags, dozens of Palestinians began to flee their homes on foot shortly after dawn in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood of southwest Gaza City, witnesses said.

The exodus followed a sleepless night for most residents, amid ongoing exchanges of fire between Israeli ground troops and Palestinian fighters.

During the night, Israeli tanks and infantry units moved into the adjacent neighborhood of Sheikh al-Ajleen, crossing deeper into the main population center of the battered Palestinian territory.

Intense shelling was also reported in the Zeitun neighborhood of southeastern Gaza City as well as the Sheikhaliyah area in the northeastern town.

Israeli warplanes bombed about 60 targets throughout the Gaza Strip overnight, hitting weapon depots, smuggling tunnels as well as a mosque that was allegedly used to store weapons and train fighters, the Army said.

Ground troops reportedly exchanged fire with Palestinian fighters throughout the night, it said.

Palestinian medics said at least four Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded overnight. Some homes destroyed have severely been caused by hazard white phosphorous shells, with Israel denying the charge.

Hamas and its allies fired three rockets into Israel, with the projectiles detonating as far as 40 kilometers inside the Jewish state without causing injuries.

Israeli planes on Saturday dropped leaflets over Gaza warning that the Jewish state was about to escalate the campaign if Hamas militants did not stop firing rockets into Israel.

Israel launched the campaign on December 27, after Hamas militants fired more than 300 rockets into Israel in the previous week.

Israel's military said it had killed 230 militants since the start of the campaign, while Palestinian officials say 1,300 civilians have been killed.

Egypt has been spearheading Western-backed efforts to end the fighting, calling for an immediate truce, opening Gaza's border crossings, preventing arms smuggling and a call for Palestinians to resume reconciliation talks.

Both Hamas and Israel have brushed aside a UN Security Council resolution which last Thursday called for an immediate truce in the territory.

The conflict has sparked worldwide pro-Palestinian demonstrations, including one in Europe that drew tens of thousands of protesters. More rallies were planned for Sunday. AFP

ISRAELI Army tanks roll on towards the Gaza Strip from the Israeli-Gaza border near the Palestinian town of Beit Hanoun on Jan. 11. Israeli troops and armor pushed deeper into Gaza's main city on Sunday, sending panicked Palestinian civilians into flight, after Israel warned it would step up its war on Hamas which remained defiant. AFP

A war full of traps, trickery

JERUSALEM—THE GROUNDWORK taken battle unfolding in the densely populated Gaza Strip is a war of new tactics, quick adaptations and infuriations.

Hamas, with training from Iran and Hezbollah, has used the last two years to turn Gaza into a deadly maze of tunnels, booby traps and sophisticated roadside bombs. Weapons caches are hidden in mosques, schoolyards and civilian houses, and the leadership's warrants it is battling Israeli intelligence officials say.

Unwilling to take Israel's bait and come into the open, Hamas militants are fighting in civilian clothes, even the police have been ordered to take off their uniforms. The militants emerge from tunnels to launch surprise weapons or ambush missiles, then disappear back inside, hoping to lure the Israeli soldiers with them first.

In one incident, soldiers also found a pile of weapons with a grenade launcher on top. When they moved the launcher, "they saw a detonation cable up, but somehow it didn't go off."

The Israeli Army has also become prepared for a battle both sides know was inevitable. Every soldier, Israeli officials say, is well-armed with a ceramic vest and helmet. Every unit has dogs trained to sniff out explosives and people hidden in tunnels, as well as combat engineers trained to defuse hidden bombs.

To avoid booby traps, the Israelis say, they enter buildings by "breaking through side walls, rather than going in the front."

And the Israelis, too, are resorting to tricks.

Israelis are telephoning Gazans and, in good Arabic, pretending to be sympathetic Egyptians, Saudis, Jordanians or Libyans, Gazans say and Israel has confirmed. After appearing a source of the Israeli army said asking about the family, the callers ask about local conditions, whether the family supports Hamas and if there are fighters in the building or the neighborhood. AFP

Taiwan to cut number of foreign laborers

TAIPEI, TAIWAN—TAIWAN plans to cut the number of foreign laborers working on the island in a bid to create jobs for locals amid the economic downturn, a newspaper reported on Sunday.

The economics ministry has proposed barring major public projects from employing foreign workers, the United Daily News reported. It also proposed offering subsidies to manufacturers that employ Taiwanese workers.

The paper quoted Yoni Min-hsiao Tsai (Yoni Tsai) as saying 33,000 jobs could be released for Taiwanese under the plan. Taiwan currently employs about 350,000 foreign laborers.

Tsai said the proposal would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval later this month.

Officials were not available for comment on Sunday.

Taiwan's jobless rate soared to a four-year high of 4.84 percent in November.

But critics question if Taiwanese are willing to take up blue-collar jobs, noting that many employers provide harsh working conditions and meager salary workloads for foreign laborers.

Tsai said there are no plans to replace the 170,000 foreigners who work as caretakers at homes and hospitals. AP

Skiing accident may affect German polls

BERLIN—A DEADLY SKIING ACCIDENT IN which a woman was killed and a powerful politician narrowly survived has captivated Germany, in a weeklong storyline-of-a-lifetime tragedy has evolved into a criminal inquiry with political ramifications in a crucial election year.

Dieter Althaus, the minister-president, or prime minister, of the eastern German state of Thuringia and an important ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel, faces an investigation into involuntary manslaughter in connection with his collision on New Year's Day with the woman, Beate Christandl, on a ski slope at the luxurious resort of Kronerude.

Christandl, 45, a Bavarian who lived in the United States, was not wearing a helmet and died of her injuries. Althaus, 50, was wearing a helmet, but he remains hospitalized with head injuries.

Since the accident, German newspapers and magazines have been filled with conjecture about who was to blame—with Althaus bearing the brunt of suspicion—and photographs of the intersection of the two ski trails where the accident occurred, crisscrossed with arrows and lines describing the paths each of the skiers followed to their collision.

Both skiers were experienced, according to friends, but the location of the collision appears to indicate that Althaus hooked around a crash barrier and into Christandl's slope.

Local officials have emphasized the birthday of Christandl's 5-year-old son two days after the accident, and the presence of Althaus' wife and his government deputy at her funeral on Wednesday in Austria. Christandl's husband, Bernhard Christandl, is an Austrian citizen working in Norfolk, Va., as a lawyer with Nato.

Walter Plathow, a spokesperson for the London prosecutor's office, said it would be at least four weeks before a decision could be made as to whether charges should be filed. Police said that investigators were still awaiting results from the coroner and from an accident specialist working on the case. Althaus, whom doctors placed in an induced coma after the accident, was conscious but was not yet well enough to be questioned, Plathow said.

Althaus was reinstated in Thuringia by helicopter on Friday and is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Jena, not far from the state capital, Erfurt. Specialists last accompanied in Thuringia about Althaus' political future, with the state holding its next election this August. AFP

Prince Harry apologizes over racist remark

LONDON—BRITAIN'S PRINCE HARRY apologized on Saturday after a newspaper website published video footage showing him calling an Asian army colleague a "Paki", but he said he had used the term without malice.

The top-selling News of the World tabloid said the recording was made in 2006, a year after Harry was pictured for wearing a Nazi uniform at a costume party, a gaffe that sparked an international outcry.

In some of the footage, 24-year-old Harry—grandson of Queen Elizabeth and third in line to the British throne—is behind the camera and can be heard making a mock commentary.

"Anyone else here ... oh, our little Paki friend ... Ahmed," Harry says as he zooms onto the face of an Pakistani-born cadet while assisting as an airport to fly to Cyprus.

The word "Paki" is derogatory slang for an immigrant or descendant of an immigrant from Pakistan.

BRITAIN'S Prince Harry AP

Harry was also shown telling another officer cadet wearing a camouflage veil during a night maneuver in Cyprus, "You look like a ragbag!"—an offensive term for an Arab.

A spokesperson for Britain's royal family said there had been no racist intent in Harry's words.

"Prince Harry fully understands how offensive this term [Paki] can be, and is extremely sorry for any offense his words might cause," the spokesperson said.

"However, on this occasion three years ago, Prince Harry used the term without any malice and as a nickname about a highly popular member of the platoon."

"There is no question that Prince Harry was in any way seeking to insult his friend," The spokesperson said Harry had used "ragbag" to mean a Taliban or Iraqi insurgent.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), an umbrella group for British Muslim organizations, said Harry's language had been unacceptable and had undermined the image of the Army which has been trying to recruit more widely from minorities. Reuters

UK pets left out in cold

LONDON—BRITAIN MAY BE A nation of animal lovers, but charities here are reporting a sharp rise in the number of pets abandoned as owners struggling with the downturn find they can no longer afford them.

Stretched animal welfare organizations fear the situation will only get worse as Britain sinks into recession this year.

"We have had people bringing in animals, saying they are their pets but they just can't afford to look after them any more," said Layla Barrie, chief executive of the Dogs Trust in Cat and Dog Herter in north-eastern England.

"There have been cases where people have been evicted from their homes, and can't take their animals with them. Yet there it's heart-breaking but they have to give their animals up."

The shelter took in more than 73 pets over Christmas and New Year's Eve, many more than usual for this time of year. And the picture is repeated across Britain—at a time when winter temperatures are plummeting.

National animal welfare charity Blue Cross said the number of people giving up their animals because they faced financial difficulties had gone up by 56 percent in 2008. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
- Bobcats zap Wizards; Jazz hold off Pistons (A30)

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SPORTS

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All About Image

Manny picked over Hatton

Pacman stronger, quicker in 140 lb class, says Briton's ex-promoter

Late Sports on A22

PACQUIAO

By Cedelf P. Tupas

THE FORMER PROmoter of Ricky Hatton has claimed the British fighter's chances against Manny Pacquiao, saying the Filipino sensation will be stronger and quicker than when he pummeled Oscar De La Hoya last month.

"I have to admit I think like Hatton's chances," Frank Warren, widely considered as the top promoter in Britain, said in an article posted on boxingscene.com.

Warren was under Pacquiao's wing for several years, but he has had a falling out in 2005.

Warren believes the light welterweight fight will work for Pacquiao more than Hatton, the reigning IBO champion in the 140-lb division.

"Boxing at light-welterweight will suit him [Hatton] but it will have Pacquiao more in-more left to that his quicker than he was against Oscar De La Hoya at welterweight and even stronger," Warren said.

Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, had predicted a "late knockout victory" for the Gen. Santos City southpaw in the mega-bout they're down scheduled May 2 in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao has also been installed by Las Vegas pundits as a 2-1 favorite to beat Hatton, who is coming off an 11th-round destruction of American Paul Malignaggi last November.

Hatton's trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr., had earlier belittled Pacquiao's chances against Hatton.

Mexican Erik Morales, who lost twice by knockout to Pacquiao in their fight trilogy, has also picked Hatton to prevail.

Pacquiao said Hatton will split the expected $50-$2 million fight purse with Top Rank promoter Bob Arum, adding that Hatton's big following in Britain will contribute handsomely to revenues from the showdown.

"We might do a million homes on pay-per-view in England," Arum said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times recently.

"So, how to get Hatton some credit for what he brings to the table."

Unheralded Cebu cager stirs Pharex

By Jeanine W. Pays

SAN SALVADOR, an undistinguished junior from Cebu, found an instant fan in Pharex coach Jerry Codiñera.

Codiñera pumped in a personal career-high of 22 points to lift the Bruins to an 83-73 win over the Jetjets.

"I think the guys are getting a feel for each other," said Pharex coach Codiñera. "The more well the seven stand at the end of the second will be eliminated. And at 3-7, the Generals meet with their last two games to boost their quarterfinal chances.

Salvador typified the Generals' aggression and the former star of University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu scored 15 points of the Pirek division at a lifting reward.

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SBP wants three-year pacts for RP five prospects

By Jose Navarro

PLAYERS IMPRESSIVE IN THE ASEAN BASKETBALL League (ABL) have been identified by Filipinas to join the national team will have to forge making the jump to the Philippine Basketball Association for some time.

SBP executive director Sid Eala said the final 16 members of the national pool would sign a three-year contract with the SBP to keep the lineup intact in the run-up to the 2011 Olympics.

Eala said the contract should prevent the players from joining the pro leagues unless their collegiate careers are over.

"Everybody will be presented with good packages," said Eala, stressing that each player's contract would depend on his market value.

"They can play locally and internationally and, at the same time, get paid professionally."

CASIO

ISU

HENSON

AL-HUSSAINI

ABABOU

The top pay for a PBA rookie is P150,000.

Eala said that players qualified to apply in the coming PBA Rookie Draft would get a higher compensation compared to those who are still playing for their schools in the collegiate leagues.

A case in point is former La Salle standout JV Casio, a guaranteed first-rounder in the PBA Draft.

"We will pressure an offer (equivalent) to what he's supposed to get in the PBA," said Eala.

Aside from Casio, Ateneo's Chris Tiu is expected to get the same deal while reigning UAAP MVP Rabeh Al-Hussaini of Ateneo, La Salle's Nico Minchelbe and Dwight Ababou, Ogie Menor of San Beda, FEU's Mark Barroca, Nino Bucacael and JR Casadaig, among others, would have to finish their collegiate eligibility to secure a better package.

Other players in the 20-man developmental pool handpicked by SBP national team project director Rajko Toroman are UST's Dylan Ababou and Jerry Cruz, Martin Reyes and Hugi Sison of UP, Ateneo's Nonoy Baclao and Ryan Buenafe, FEU's Mac Lee and Manny Arellano, JC Intal of Letran and big men Jiro Fajardo, Yusef Chouaifa and Philip Paredes.

"We are asking them to consider staying with the RP team for a while," said Eala. "This is an alternate path to the PBA because the players in the RP team will make them a well-rounded player."

Eala said the final 16 would be finalized after the developmental pool goes to Serbia and the United States in summer for tuneup games and training stints.

The players to be chosen will see action in the Southeast Asian Games in Laos at the end of the year, the 2013 Asian Games and 2011 Fiba-Asia Championship, the qualifying tournament for the 2012 London Olympics.

Eala said a one-year contract extension would be granted once the players make it to the Olympics.

Champs flash vintage forms in UAAP wars

By Jasmine N. Payo

THE DEFENDING CHAMPIONS STAYED on top form in various UAAP competitions that kicked off over the weekend.

University of Santo Tomas looked poised to retain the men's and women's tennis crowns following sweeping wins yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Adamson got off to a strong start in baseball at the Rizal Memorial ballpark, while University of the Philippines also find few worries in its opening-day softball campaign last Saturday at the UST field.

UST moved within a win of sweeping the first round in men's volleyball action, after prevailing at Far Eastern University last the lead in women's action last Saturday at the FEU Open.

The Tigers, who swept last year's eliminations round to bag the men's crown title, rolled on a trio of victorious and joining guns to post a 4-1 victory over Ateneo.

Rookie Miguel Antonio scored a 6-3, 6-2 straight set win over Ateneo's Carlos, while sophomore Raymond Villarosa overpowered Julius Lagmay, 6-1, 6-1, in straights.

The veterans started the fight for UST in doubles as Alexander Diego and Ronee Bacaquino tripped Jilo Opdenicia and Mike Inverso, 6-1, 6-3, and Jeffrey Orillosa and Gerald Pleil crushed Leyan Montero and Louie Macalino, 6-1, 6-1.

Aiming for a record fourth straight crown, the Tigresses whipped the Lady Maroons with a similar 4-1 triumph.

Mikki Reandelar teamed up a 6-2, 6-1 win over Kim Guillermo and Mary Sohn came up with a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Jane Shinder in singles.

Last season's MVP Bianca Bautista Jr. led the Blossoms up 10-13 win of La Salle in baseball, while UP joined the early winners by slipping past National University, 7-6.

Freshmen also counted in the Lady Maroons' scoring line for their first-ever softball titles as Lorelie Bone and Alice Talunan keyed their 9-2 triumph over the Lady Eagles.

In volleyball, Adrian Pelobas scored 20 points, including 11 hits and three aces, to fill the offensive firepower to their sixth straight victory, a 25-15, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-9 decision over the UE Red Warriors.

The Lady Tans, led by Maica Morada, Cherry May Oras and Rachel Enquin, also kept the lead at 3-1 after recovering from a set down to nip the Red Hens, 21-25, 25-14, 25-14, 25-16.

HAB EASTERN'S Irish Morada slams it over Gretchen Ho of Arellano. The Lady Tams remained on top with a 3-1 card.

Nat'l Open cycling stakes pool berths

SLOTS IN THE NATIONAL CYCLING POOL will be at stake when the National Open championships is held on Jan. 13 to 16 in Tagaytay City and in the Amorsolo Velodrome in Quezon City.

PhilCycling is in the process of forming the National team for this year's international competitions, including the December Southeast Asian Games in Laos.

The 160-km road and 40-km mountain bike races kick off on Thursday at 9 a.m., from the Tagaytay International Convention Center.

The following day, the track races — individual pursuit, olympic sprint and 1 km — will start at 8 a.m. at Velodrome.

The Philippine Olympic Committee and Philippine Sports Commission have been encouraging national sports associations to host competition events early for the Laro't Games.

The new set of officials of PhilCycling, which carries the official name Integrated Cycling Federation of the Philippines, will serve as members of the new national pool, according to outgoing president Bert Lina.

PhilCycling will choose the new members of the 20-man board on Friday at 1 p.m. at the Amorsolo multipurpose Hall.

Diana Dyhengco, Intramuros 10KD president for 9th board is heading Amateur Cycling Association head Haji Abu Jamah Malsah as the federation's representative in the elections.

Among the frontrunners for the elections to be participated in by 97 clubs are Tagaytay Mayor Abraham Tolentino, Harbour Centre owner Mitos Tionson, Simon City Committee Dean Bolaños, Intramuros Administration Peejay Rivera and Makati's Sonco and Tour contender Jean-Claude Ramirez.

Alvenico S. Austria

SPORTSWATCH

NGAP rules school Jan. 21

THE NATIONAL GOLF ASSOCIATION OF the Philippines (NGAP) will host the 2009 PGA Pro-Am School on Jan. 21 and 22 with representatives of the various golf clubs in the country at the Mahang Country Club.

NGAP Rules chair Eliseo Soliven, deputy chair David Ayala and assistant director Kevin Gallardo will serve on Jan. 18 to conduct the seminar and practical demonstration on the course.

Registration will open with the payment of P1,500 for NGAP-member-clubs and P1,800 for nonmember clubs.

This is actually the second time that the Philippines is hosting an R&A Rules School, underscoring the latter's recognition of the NGAP's effort to improve the local rules' refereeing technique.

PCAP series fires off today

TOP COCKPIT PERFORMERS FROM METRO MANILA go to battle today in the Pinoy Cockpit Association of the Philippines (PCAP) Cock Derby series at the Makati Coliseum.

Two group's 30 members are all expected to hold their unweighed fighters to gains crucial headstart in the PCAP Cocks of the Year race, according to organizer Eliseo Gallaza and Cindy Salud.

Quang Ilda Cruz of Pasig bagged the cocker title last year with Jorge Fajardo and Jojo Jarmoja emerging as runners-up.

Meanwhile, the Makati Invitational 9-Cock Derby tackles on Feb. 8 and 8 with a 5-cock eliminations and a 5-cock finals.

SJC cocktest resumes today

THE COURT CALENDAR FOR OPENING OF the 2009 Season-Ender 8-Cock Derby gets going today at the San Juan Coliseum.

With nine more qualifying round left on Wednesday, the total number of entries is expected to reach more than 200.

The SJC management is making a guaranteed prize of P6 million for an entry fee of P6,000.

Aside from the 2008 SJC International 8-Cock Derby specials on Jan. 30, 31, 31 and Feb. 7. Two days of eliminations will be held on Jan. 26 and 28 with the remainder set on Jan. 30 and the finals on Feb. 2.

2009 World Slasher Cup is biggest ever

CLEAN LIVING

Manuels R. Migo

THE BIGGEST EVER WORLD SLASHER Cup is set for January 30-31 as over-the-fighting enthusiasts at Insular-area sport-arena Jorge "Nene" Bocobo announced a strong field of nearly 200 entries that will vie for fame and honor from Jan. 19 to 24 at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I am personally inviting you to come and enjoy the fights in the Big Dome," said the dapper derby promoter and avid cockfighting aficionado.

From an average of 60 entries to a high of 150 per singling, this year's number is a result to enter the record books in the biggest ever in the history of the World Slasher Cup.

Considered as the "toughest cockfighting event in the world," this international derby-of-champions was revealed from the usual three-day format to five days.

Glo Arena, a Big Dome old-timer, said elimination matches will be held on Jan. 19 to 20, the semifinals on Jan. 22 and 23 and the finals on Jan. 24.

* * *

The 20-strong foreign contingent will be headed by former champion Ray Alexander of Alabama and Roger Roberts of Georgia. Also seeing action are many-time Manila victors Chuck Berry of Oklahoma and Mike Formosa of Hawaii, Richard McCormick of Canada and Associates Greg Berlie.

On the other hand, a full complement of the Philippines' cockfighting Who's Who is bellicose to win the World Slasher Cup, the most coveted prize in the sport.

"We have proven in recent past that Filipino cocker-breeders are at par with their American counterparts," said Rey Briones, a newcomer who surprised everyone by winning the 2008 World Slasher Cup local tilt with veteran Mort Bitanga.

"It's time to break the colonial mentality that imported cocks or gam bloodlines are unbeatable," he stressed. "That's not true anymore."

He said that local crowbreeds are performing better in recent years and that imported cocks are no longer a guarantee that they will dominate the big-time derbies here.

* * *

In winning the World Slasher Cup, Briones only fielded locally bred fighting cocks, yet he beat the pure bloodlines of famous American cocker-breeders Dayton Gard Hamrick, Ray Alexander and Roger Roberts.

Now breeding his own signature bloodlines—the Spartan Reds and Greys—in his cockpit farms in Marbella and Bacolod City, Briones has joined past World Slasher Cup champions including former Sentenador Eraclito Ogsimpan, Mene Asensio, the late Jaime Chingbun, Peping Quinagon and his partner Ilang Roques, former Rep. Rudy Albano, Satellite Abbey Reyes, Pampanga's pride Ato and Rudy Jingco, Eddie Amores, Dexie Lim, Hector Antonio, William Co, lawyer Rudy Salud and Wilson Ong.

* * *

The steady stream of top American cocker-breeders who brought here by Filipino cockfighting legends such as D.O. Pinto, Dr. A.P. Reyes, Jose Lanuzo, Jimmy Chengbun, Ramon Hilvis, Ricardo Silverio, the Lacsamana of Bacolod, the Cojuangcos of Tarlac and the Yulos and Montelibano of Negros.

These true-blue pioneers were responsible for infusing the bloodlines that improved local strains, thus making the Philippine Filipino sport of cockfighting the envy of the world.

Among the names familiar to Filipino subscriber were Arredondo cockfighting greats like Duke Halsey, Jon Goode, Billy Abbot, Oscar Silvia, Billy Bubba, Richard Suttee, Inez Gray, Carol Hemmilla, Bob Howard, Ray Alexander and Tom Wilson.

Meanwhile, the Longhollow teams that the cockfighting calendar is now buzzing at the seams, with several international derbies lined up for this new year.

Among them are the three-day National Cockers' Alliance World Slasher Championship Derby at the Tuazon Coliseum in Pasig City which gets going tomorrow, and other international derbies slated in Metro Manila cockpits.

SHOT IN THE ARM Pasaloe City has joined the Philippine National Shooting Association's National Youth Development Program youth competition in preparation for the 2010 Youth Olympics. Mayor Vico Sotto (center) and NYDP chair Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla (second from right) with shooters Tagaytay, Taguig, Makati, Quezon City, Ateneo and Marine Corps dependents under deputy commandant Brig. Gen. Nicolas Evarista III in the shoulder. The new NYDP shooter is seen Jan. 24 and 22. Also in photo are (from left) NYDP vice chair Tito Polera, acting city administrator Benjamin Villacorta and special project officer Nelson Garcia.

Coach E resumes Jan. 20

THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL opens its 2009 calendar on Jan. 20 in the San Beda College Alabang.

Boasting an impressive six-student roster of 13's, the scientific basketball training for kids will also hold clinics at The Zone Makati (Jan. 21 to March 14), Xavier School in San Juan (Jan. 22 to March 14) and Chelsea Place in Cebu (Jan. 23 to March 14).

Coach E. Basketball School has three modules that are tailored into various academic focusing on fundamentals and also training.

Coach E, founded by champion PBA coach Eric Altamirano in 2004, has likewise inked a deal with 15-hour Hawaiian of Vera Manfredo Pharmaceutical Corp. as long-term partners.

Vera Manfredo, president of the International Handball Academy and one of Coach E's trainees, lauded Coach E's partnership with 15-hours.

"We're glad that 15-hours is now our long-term partner," said Huang. "They believe in our programs which not only teaches basketball the smart way but instills discipline and values in our kids."

For inquiries on fees, discounts and schedules, interested parties may call 811-1191 (Jenkins) and 0923-7762630.

Irene Silva, Contributor

Asia seals Royal Trophy victory over 'rusty' Europe

CHONBURI, THAILAND—ABSOLUTE. Asia beat rusty winners Europe to win the Royal Trophy for the first time on Sunday after dominating all three days of the match play contest.

Captain Tony Sadgrove lauded the winning pair for Asia, who needed only two points on the final day to prevail over a wayward and weary European side who never found its feet in the competition.

"I'm very happy because we led the first two times," said Sadgrove after his 7&6 win over Nicolas Fanchi in the third singles match.

"I'm happy for all the players, the level of the course has been great."

Imbued with confidence after carrying a massive five-point advantage into the final day, the Asians fought hard to prevent any chance of a European revival and had in five of the eight matchups of the midway stage.

European drove first kissed when Paul Lawrie, the top performer on value captain Ivor Hinch Oberdorf could lead hers a "route" European team, Israel Liang-Wuanhong, 3&2, to grab a point.

In form

In Pairs That Pinyol Shaikwang then romped to a 5&4 victory over struggling Spaniard Pablo Larrazabal, who had an ugly round with four bogeys and three double bogeys, to allow Sadgrove to claim the trophy with his win over Fanchi.

Adam Blyth made amends for a grim first two days, taking four birdies in the first six holes on his way to a 3&1 win over SK Ho, while Scott Hunter secured a half after finishing all square with Ryo Ishikawa.

Oliver Wilson was 2 up over Hideto Tanihara and Nick Dougherty was 1 up against Chawlet Wi in their bid to add vital extra points for the defeated European team.

Thai Thongchai Jaidee added more gloss to a wretched week for Paul McGinley with a 3&1 win over the Irishman, who lost his irishness crossed to score golf as a result of the Asian triumph. Reuters

Hot Ogilvy leads Benz golf by six

KAHUKU, HAWAII—GEOFF OGILVY HAS off three straight birdies on the back nine and shot an 8-under 63 on Saturday to make five rose of the tournaments only field at the Mercedes-Benz Championship. Four to Kingsbury were playing for second.

The wind switched directions, making Ogilvy play entirely different. What didn't change was the grey smog the leaderboard.

Leading by one shot to start the final round, Ogilvy played bogey-free for the second time in three rounds and wound up with a 10-under total over Kaminski and Ed Tobias as he rates to win the US PGA Tour's season opening event.

Ogilvy made eight birdies over his final 14 holes on his way to a 63, the kind of round that he thought would give him a chance to win. But he never had a good look at the leaderboard until he walked onto the 18th green, where that Ogilvy was at 19 under.

"It was a little deflating, to say the least," Leonard said.

Tobias was one shot behind Ogilvy and simply couldn't keep up and shot a 70.

About the only thing Ogilvy did wrong was fail to convert three reasonable birdie chances on the closing holes, including the 18th, the only par 5 he had to birdie on the third round. He won at 19-under 269, the second largest 54-hole lead at Kapalua behind Tiger Woods in 1999.

"It's never over until the last hole," Ogilvy said. "I've never had a lead like this going into Sunday, so it will be a nice experience for me."

It might be a new course, too.

While the Bears visited to make significant change in club selection, the forecast includes a big thunderstorm approaching the islands, leading the host to move the starting times up some three hours.

Sorenstam gets hitched

In Orlando, Florida, hockey Sorenstam and Mike McGee were married on Saturday, four weeks after the Swedish golf star ended her Hall of Fame career.

About 125 guests attended the afternoon ceremony and evening reception at Lake Nona Golf and Country Club. McGee, the son of former US PGA Tour player Jerry McGee, has served as managing director for last month's Mercedes-Benz Championship.

Annika Sorenstam, 38, is a former golf star who won 72 LPGA Tour titles and 10 major championships. She retired from golf in December 2008.

Tyson Wilhelm, the minister at Christian Campus House at Tabor University in Augusta, Indiana, officiated the ceremony. AP

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Shoulder injury knocks off defending champion

Murray rules Qatar tennis; Serena bucks bad call to advance in tuneup tourney

MARIA SHARAPOVA, busy serve

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN LOST ITS DEFENDING champion even before it could get started, and one of those tipped to take advantage of the situation struggled to advance in a warm-up tournament.

Maria Sharapova advised tournament officials on Sunday that she would not be able to defend her title at Melbourne Park beginning Jan. 19.

The Australian Open triumph marked an 18-month winning streak for the Russian, enabling the Russian to briefly reclaim her No. 1 ranking in May. However, the shoulder injury has pared her progress in the second half of the year, leaving her out of the Beijing Olympics and the US Open and ending her season.

"I am very sorry to announce that I am not going to be able to defend my title at this year's Australian Open," Sharapova said in a statement. "My shoulder is doing great, but I just unfortunately sustained a stress reaction and just not sure the level I need to be to compete at the highest levels."

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said he was disappointed for Sharapova, who beat Ana Ivanovic of Serbia in the 2008 final.

"She played some amazing tennis on Rod Laver Arena last year and has a massive legion of fans in Australia," Tiley said. "I know she has been working around the clock to try and get back from the shoulder injury. In the end, time beat her. But you."

Serena Williams, who beat Samantha Stosur in three tough sets at the Sydney International on Saturday, said she was aware of Sharapova's ongoing shoulder concerns.

"I know she's been dealing with some injuries," said Williams. "She's been having a tough time. Everyone has tough injuries."

Asked if she'd miss the challenge of playing Sharapova in Melbourne, Williams said: "I'm focused on the rest of the people and the rest of the draw."

"I think my major threat, is like you see people today like Ana Stosur is their four-round routers who are playing unbelievable and they want to do their best."

Williams overcame a glaring chair umpiring mistake and a partisan crowd to win her first match of the season, a 6-3, 4-7, (4), 7-5 decision over the Australian Stosur at Sydney International.

Last year's US Open champion was serving for the match at 6-5 and 30-30 in the second set when chair umpire failed to notice an obvious net fault when Williams' serve hit the net and sent the serving session to Stosur's side of the net. Williams didn't even bother to chase down Stosur's return, believing it to be a certain hit.

Moments later Stosur was broken to love and went on to break Williams and win the crowd's affection. Williams fought off four match points in the 10th game of the third set before finishing Stosur two games later to seal the match.

In Doha, Qatar, Andy Murray disregarded risk that he's the favorite for the Australian Open after his successful defense of the Qatar Open title on Saturday.

No. 4-ranked Murray defeated No. 8 Andy Roddick, 6-4, 7-5, to win the first ATP final of the year.

The Scot beat Roger Federer in the semifinals. He also defeated Federer and top-ranked Rafael Nadal last month to an exhibition to Abu Dhabi.

In Sydney, Australia, Radek Stepanek of the Czech Republic came from a set down for a third straight match to beat Spain's Fernando Verdasco, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, on Sunday and take the Brisbane International final. AP

BUST A GROOVE Radek Stepanek breaks dancers after beating Fernando Verdasco of Spain. AFP

Tiu leads Pampanga race field

DEFENDING CHAMPION JONATHAN TIU of JCT Rhodes Racing center top honors after leadership on the game for his second straight win in the third leg of the 2008 Pagcor Tour Racing Championship-Hot Shots Series at the Clark International Speedway (CIS) Drag Strip in Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga on Saturday.

The rider reportedly has 20 points, winning his third straight career title after emerging as the back-to-back champion of the Iron Alloy Coffee Drag Racing Championship of the Batangas Racing Group.

He made a big comeback in the last leg where he not only captured the Quick 8 crown, but also set a new quickest from Wheel Turbo Charge record of 9.914 seconds.

But five talented drivers—amateurs Orel Cebrano driver David E. Lim of OGL Motorsports, first leg winner Ken Reyner, Yuan Garcia and Ruben de Peral of JC Autosport Hamster and Rancher Racing's Christian Go—are out to snap him as they are also hoping to secure the crown.

Tiu is in the lead overall with 35 points after scalding runner-up Hot in the kitchen leg and a third place finish in the first leg while Reyner will try to stage a comeback aboard his classic 1969 Camaro.

For details, log on to eventsmanagementgroup.com or call 5172294, 7267365 or fax 8151243. AP

Lance arrives Down Under for comeback race

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA—LANCE Armstrong arrived in Australia on Sunday a few hours after his former boss, and a few days ahead of when Tour Down Under officials indicated he would.

The retired cyclist flew in from Europe via Singapore in preparation for the 2nd Pro Tour race, which starts on Jan. 18 and marks the return of seven-time Tour de France winner Armstrong to professional competition four years after he retired.

Armstrong was said by race officials early Monday to be still resting at his home in Spain, and that he might not arrive in Australia until midweek.

But Armstrong was shown in Seven Network television footage later Sunday arriving at Sydney airport, about a 75-minute flight from Adelaide.

Race director Mike Turtur had earlier said he had been given details of Armstrong's arrival but had been asked not to disclose them.

Turtur was still planning on even after Armstrong's arrival, also was shown.

"In his form, really?" Turtur told The Associated Press while having dinner Sunday. "If he is, I don't know anything about it."

Armstrong team manager Bruni Hirsu said the team would make without to use for the first part of the week but did not believe that would be a problem heading into the first race of the season.

"Lance has been training very hard, he's had three years out and wants to make up some lost ground. He's more than ready," Hirsu said.

Cancer survivor Armstrong is using his return to cycling to fashion the fight against cancer worldwide. While in Adelaide he will appear at two major functions, including one run by the Cancer Council of South Australia.

As well as the Tour Down Under, his race schedule for 2009 will include the Giro d'Italia and an attempt to win an unprecedented eighth Tour de France.

Pushing on his 37th birthday next week, Armstrong said preparations for the new season were much different to what he had been involved with in the past with his training starting in the American summer of 2008. AP

Cardinals boot out Panthers; Ravens advance

THE ARIZONA CARDINALS CRUISED into the NFC championship game with a stunning 33-13 victory over the Carolina Panthers on Saturday, the surprise win built on the unexpected home heroics of quarterback Jake Delhomme.

Kurt Warner passed for two touchdowns and the Cardinals' opportunistic defense made Delhomme's 34th birthday a miserable one, forcing a fumble and two interceptions.

At home, the NFC West champions will play the winner of Sunday's game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the New York Giants for the conference title on Jan. 18.

Carolina (12-5) scored the game's first touchdown, then yielded 33 consecutive points to the Cardinals (11-7).

In Nashville, Tennessee, the Baltimore Ravens notched, 13-10, against the Tennessee Titans thanks to Matt Stover's 43-yard field goal with 31 seconds remaining in the NFL playoffs on Saturday.

Two teams with no one-one dislike for each other never stopped pounding it out in overtime and rain.

The difference: Baltimore forced three turnovers and never gave away the ball.

And when quarterback Joe Flacco led a 61-yard drive in the dying moments to set up Stover's game-winning kick, the Ravens were headed to the AFC championship game. Led by the first rookie quarterback to win two playoff games, the Ravens will play at Pittsburgh at Los Diego next week for the right to go to the Super Bowl.

Baltimore's playoff run looks really, really familiar if you're the Tennessee Titans. Both have made it over the championship in 2000. Back then, it also was a wild card and also was in Tennessee on the way to the title.

The game was so rugged that the highlight reel play was all five linebackers for the Ravens' defense. Ray Lewis, Terrell Suggs, Bart Scott, Jarret Johnson and Dan Cody all had sacks of Titans quarterback Vince Young, who was knocked out of the game in the second quarter with a concussion.

THE DEFENSE of the Carolina Panthers lines up against the offense of the Arizona Cardinals on the start of the season. AFP

SPORTS

Ardina, Tanpinco test Ikeda's worth

By Maureen B. Castillo

CHERRY IDEKA WILL HAVE her hands full when the pair for a second straight ICTSI Philippine Ladies' Open title starting Wednesday with Dottie Ardina and two-time match play champion Aiza Tanpinco becomes among her challengers.

The bubbly Ikeda, who won five tournaments last year, is still tipped as the player to beat in the three-day tournament set at the flat but challenging Manila Southwoods layout in Laguna.

Ardina extended her form of absence from her swollen in the United States in an effort to win this tournament for the first time.

"I am ready and in top condition," said Ardina, winner of three international titles last year, including the Junior World in San Diego and the Eagle Creek Open in Florida.

Also set to be overlooked is the talented Tanpinco, a winner who is entertaining thoughts of turning professional and has been longing to win this version of the IGF championship.

Tanpinco will again display the form that carried her to victories even made rivals in the La Salle Alumni Match Play in Taguig two last month.

Backing the event are Jayco-Goo, HIL, De Capridor Jewelries, RCBC, Baileys, Cleveland Applicators, Mapei Botanicals, Big Beavers, Rapido, Dunrake Shoes, Zenaveen and Callaway.

Out to foil the local hero bid are Malaysian Diane Lake, Lilibeth De Raad and Army Shik of the US, Koreans Ji Hyun Lee, Ji Sun Li, Ho Shin Lee and Jeong Eun Lee and Indonesians Inni Putri Chandra and Dita Widyanata.

Bobcats zap Wizards; Jazz hold off Pistons

WASHINGTON—THE CHARLOTTE BOBCATS staged a fourth-quarter rally to overturned the Washington Wizards before holding on for a 92-89 road win on Saturday.

Raja Bell scored 19 points and Boris Diaw added 18 as the Bobcats won for the first time in three games in a match-up between the two weakest teams in the Eastern Conference.

"We kept fighting tonight. If you do that for long enough during a game you will always give yourself a chance to win," Bell told reporters.

Gerao Ballie had 19 for the Wizards, who lost their fourth consecutive game as they continue to struggle without point guard Gilbert Arenas, who is recovering from knee surgery.

The Bobcats (14-24) erased a five-point deficit with an 11-3 run to lead 90-85 with two minutes remaining and held on for the victory.

"We had a great opportunity," Ballie told reporters. "We just dropped the ball on one of the plays and probably even a little bit too quickly. We lost a game that we felt like we should have had and that's tough."

Shawn ess. Antawn Howard and Adam Morrison added 12 and 11 points respectively with Raymond Felton delivering 11 assists.

In Salt Lake City, the Utah Jazz extended its current dominance of the Detroit Pistons with a 99-82 victory, making it eight straight wins over the Eastern Conference side.

Mehmet Okur scored 30 of his 32 points in the first half to set up the win that saw Utah edge within 2-1/2 wins of Northwest Division leader Denver.

Detroit last beat Utah in early 2005.

In Houston, a strong team effort compensated for the absence of injured stars as the Rockets cruised past the struggling New York Knicks, 98-76.

The Rockets had five players with at least 14 points, making up for the absence of Tracy McGrady and Yao Ming and moving within two games of Southwest Division leader San Antonio.

In Portland, Oregon, the Trail Blazers defeated a 10th straight defeat on the lowly Golden State Warriors, 113-109.

Lamarcus Aldridge had 26 points to top the Portland scorers while Rudy Fernandez added 19 in his return from a hamstring injury.

In Minneapolis, Minnesota rallied from 13 points down in the second half for a thrilling 110-109 triumph over Milwaukee.

Randy Foye scored 10 of his 11 points in the fourth quarter to guide the Timberwolves, who have won five in a row for the first time since 2005.

In Chicago, Kevin Durant scored 28 points to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder over the Bulls, 109-98, in overtime, snapping just their sixth win of the season.

Nick Collison added a season-high 21 for the Thunder, who trailed by seven midway through the fourth quarter.

Oklahoma City had a chance to win it at the end of regulation, but Durant missed a jumper from the top of the key and the tip-in attempt also missed.

Reuters, AP

MASHED Wilson Jennifer and the Detroit Pistons run into another wall against Boris Bosilio (left), Andrei Kirilenko and the Utah Jazz, who they lost loss in 2005.

Muay thai launches semi-pro tilt

By Pilar Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE MUAY THAI TRIES TO step out of the shadows of the more popular boxing and taekwondo with the staging of a host of the first tournament on Feb. 7.

Set at the Makati Sports Club, the one-day competition will pit members of the national team, training pool and the champions who emerged from the division championships of the Philippine Olympic Festival last year.

"Our players have improved a lot in the past years, and this event will showcase only those in the elite level," said muay thai president Robert Valdez.

He said players won't wear head gear and body armor—picking up from the hugely successful mixed martial arts tournaments.

Its popularity boosted by celebrities who have recently taken up the sport, muay thai has been the silver sidearm for this country in international competitions.

While the Thais, who invented the sport, sweep all five gold medals in the 2007 Southeast Asian Games, the country bagged all the silver medals in the 2005 SEP edition, the country took three of the five golds at stake to become the overall titlist.

In last year's Sports for All in Bacoor, only muay Thai through SEA Games champ Roland Clare brought home a gold for the PP delegation.

"We are glad that our sport is now in the mainstream," said Valdez, who also coaches the likes of cruiserman Judy Ann Gomez, Petite Stella, Angelyn Enrico and Angel Locsin in their TV shows and films.

The Battle of the Best will be held every three months, Valdez added.

The winners will be fielded in the coming international event this year like the First Asean Martial Arts Games in Bangkok in April, and the Third Asian Indoor Games in Vietnam in October.

The country is also preparing for the December Laos SEA Games where Valdez hopes to challenge Thailand "in a neutral ground."

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PINEDAHAIR CLINICS

'Idol' opens new season Jan. 18, eyes more talents

DOZENS HAVE BEGGED UP AND HOME ARE expected to join the Search for the New Billboards Idol, which begins with its second season on Jan. 18 at the Superdome Sports Hall in Libis, Quezon City.

With the chance of barging into the elite circle of the country's world-renowned crooners as the ultimate prize, this searching series being run by the Billiards Managers and Players Association of the Philippines (BMPAP), is now considered as the premier grassroots program of Philippine billiards.

"This is our second season," said BMPAP co-founder Percy Mariano, who conceptualized the project early last year.

Billiards Idol attracted some 300 contenders in 15 preliminary legs last year, including stops in Davao and Baguio, and the Grand Finals featuring 27 top performers from the preliminaries.

Mike "the Lightning Kid" Takayama, a 19-year-old Filipino-Japanese, emerged as the first Billiards Idol. He pocketed P40,000.

INTEGRATED COMPUTER SYSTEMS, INC.

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Nuñona

BUSINESS

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Bank closures hit all-time high in '08

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANK CLOSURES IN THE COUNTRY REACHED an unprecedented high last year with the fall of a chain of rural banks believed to be affiliated with the bankrupt Legacy group, affecting P23.6 billion worth of customer deposits in a total of 25 padlocked banks.

Subject to verification yet: [illegible], P16.3 billion or almost 80 percent of the deposits held by these banks shut down by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and placed under receivership could be covered by the state-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., based on official government estimates.

The spate of bank closures in 2008, which banking regulators attributed more to mismanagement and unsound banking practices rather than a fallout of the US-centered global financial crisis, extended the 17 bank failures in 2007 and the 11 closures in 2006.

Thirteen of the padlocked lenders, mostly small rural banks, that were placed under the PDIC's receivership before the long Christmas break were suspected to be affiliated with the ailing Legacy pre-need and investment group headed by Sta. Domingo (Albay) Mayor and former housing official Cristoldito Angeles. They had a combined deposit base of P15.8 billion, of which P14 billion could be covered by the PDIC.

Asked about the impact of the wave of bank failures on

MORE B2

My Business Secrets MVP

Lord of Discipline

Before business owners tackle the challenges of a daunting 2009, a few tips from MVP.

PLDT and SMART Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan does not need to shout or dance for your attention. Instead you soon find yourself craning your neck to listen in on a decidedly [illegible]. He speaks in measured deliberate phrases, as if he had [illegible]

Today's subject is all about prospects, mainly any SME's prospects especially as we all face a more challenging year for business ahead. Any business student knows well about the business cycle, that familiar parabolic curve from upturn to downturn and back again. There are [illegible] judgements whether the cycle is fickle or functional, whether it is chaos or pre-ordained.

The longer you talk to him, the more you get the sense that for MVP it's really beside the point. The larger questions are the more pragmatic ones, like how to cope in real terms with an economic crisis. One which pundits say hasn't really been felt yet.

And so to start the New Year right and right, here are a few tips MVP shares for SMEs:

1) Using technology in business is long overdue. In fact, technology is now an imperative. ICT-based solutions can solve many of your efficiency and productivity issues as you try to control costs and streamline your operations for 2009.

2) Watch your costs and expenses this year and save, save, save. MVP points out that cutting out unnecessary big multinational events that are also costly is prudent and wise.

3) The main purpose of a business person is profit. That is the discipline you have to take to heart over all else, whether they be over-emotional issues or some non-relevant issues.

4) Build your relationships or networks. Although profit is your focus it can't be the only one. Foster good relationships with your local business communities and your partners. Good relationships are really based on equal responsibilities, honesty and fairness between both parties.

5) Discipline without integrity is non-sustainable. Know what you really want and what is figurative terms you really aim to achieve for the year, asses the value and ethics, and hone in your efforts from there. It's about a keener focus.

6) Business at times may deal with cold facts but it is certainly not heartless. Remember that you cannot profit without first giving back to communities and stakeholders.

In short, MVP reiterates what many other experts already say, mainly to trim or control costs and to remain liquid through larger savings. But he also matches the larger goals of big business with that of SMEs, to think about sustained long term growth, to be disciplined with success. And the only way to do that is to foster good relationships in the community you do business in. And of course he also adds that the time for business or enrolment through ICT solutions is now. It's the key for SMEs getting off on the right foot for 2009.

FPHC moves to thwart entry of hostile parties

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS Corp., the power sector holding conglomerate of the Lopez family, is proposing to thwart any hostile parties from joining its board as it calls a special stockholders' meeting on Jan. 15 to seek shareholder consent to change its corporate by-laws.

By-laws are the rules and regulations adopted by a corporation for its internal governance. These usually contain provisions relating to shareholders, directors, officers and general corporate business.

"The amendments are clearly to strengthen governance at the board level and prevent persons from entering the board who may destroy the value in the company," said FPHC vice president Benjamin Lopez said.

In a recently filed information statement relating to the meeting, FPHC said its board approved last Nov. 6 the proposed amendments to the by-laws.

Thus, FPHC is proposing to change the maximum number of days within which all proxies must be submitted to five working days from the original three working days before the meeting to give more time for the company or its proxy validation committee to rule on possible disputes on the validation of proxies before the stockholders' meeting is held.

A new provision is introduced in Article II Section 1, which provides for the general responsibility of the board of directors.

A specific provision involves additional disqualifications of directors.

Any stockholder may be elected director provided that the person will not be eligible for re-election if he or she is engaged in any business or activity which competes with or is antagonistic to that of the corporation or any of its subsidiaries and affiliates.

In addition, no person will qualify or be eligible for nomination as a director if there is a finding against him or her by final and executory judgment by the Securities and Exchange Commission or a court or other administrative body of competent jurisdiction.

The person is also disqualified if he or she is judicially declared insolvent, if there is a finding against the person by final judgment by a foreign court or equivalent regulatory authority with competent jurisdiction. The person is likewise disqualified if he or she previously committed unlawful acts detrimental or prejudicial to the reputation and interest of FPHC or to subsidiaries or affiliates.

In determining whether or not a person is engaged in a competing business, FPHC may also take into account such factors as business, professional, family relationships and other circumstances it may deem appropriate.

It said that to implement these disqualification provisions, all nominations for the election of directors by stockholders should be submitted in writing to the nomination and election committee at least a week prior to the regular board meeting before the scheduled date of the annual stockholders' meeting.

To further thwart possible hostile investors, Benpres Holdings Corp. has appointed Lopez Inc. as the voting trustee for its 46-percent stake in FPHC. Benpres is the parent firm of FPHC, while Lopez Inc. is the private investment arm of the family.

"There is no imminent threat against management. This is purely a defensive move to ensure the stability of operations and consistency of existing management," Benpres president Angel Cheng said said.

Owners' meet on Jan. 15 to amend by-laws

Alliance Tuna sees 36% export growth

ALLIANCE TUNA INTERNATIONAL INC. expects a 36-percent growth in export sales this year despite an industry-wide fear of a global economic downturn.

"We are not exposed just to the United Kingdom or the US. We are spread across the world. This is our insurance against an economic downturn. We venture to say [Alliance] Tuna is recession proof," company president Jonathan Dee said.

Dee said Alliance Tuna was expecting sales to grow to $72 million in 2009 from $53 million last year as it completes a new facility in Indonesia that would boost the company's production capacity.

Net income is likewise expected to increase to $4 million from $3 million in 2008. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

PLDT eyes HSPA rollout completion by end-January

By Rita T. Chichioco

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE Telephone Co., through subsidiary Smart Communications Inc., aims to complete its HSPA (high-speed packet access) rollout nationwide by mid-January, a top official said.

"Within the month, mga-Manila, Metro Manila and surrounding suburbs and all major cities will be covered. Some areas are already covered like Cebu City," Smart wireless adviser Orlando Vea told the business.

The HSPA rollout is programmed into the PLDT group's total investment allocation of almost $50 million for 2008 and 2009. It is the faster version of the PLDT group's current HSDPA (high-speed data packet access) services offered through PLDT MyBroadband Smart Bro.

The PLDT group started rolling out its HSPA 3GSP platform in the fourth quarter of 2008. The platform was targeted to cover 80 percent of high-population areas that are not completely covered by existing next-generation networks, DSL (digital subscriber line) and broadband wireless services.

PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno calls the HSPA 3GG a natural progression for the company's broadband technology. He said it will be layered over the third-generation network of Smart.

He added that HSPA 3GG has relatively lower capital expense compared to older platforms.

There are also covered mobile phones, data cards, routers and modems that can accept HSDPA 3GG signals. The PLDT group's wireless mobile subscriber base has reached 32 million as of end-December 2008.

Nazareno noted that HSDPA 3GG has been successfully tested in Australia, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Brazil and Argentina.

Slow trading seen

from page B1

bad expected. But the seven-phenomenon rose jumped to a 16-year high of 7.2 percent from 6.8 percent in November.

"The local stock market is still hostage to developments overseas. The labor situation in the US has gotten worse as 2008 wore on. In the first 11 months of the 2008, the US has almost 2 million jobs. US President-elect Barack Obama is planning to add 2 million jobs to the economy, but by the time the jobs are created, the US economy might have already lost more than 3 million jobs from the start of 2008," AB Capital Securities wrote in a research note.

AB Capital thus advised investors to be cautious after the stock market dropped 46 percent in 2008, there are bargain stocks to be found, the broker said.

"The recovery from the crisis of 2008 will be a slow process. The prudent strategy for the year would be to look for stocks with both short- and long-term potential and to slowly accumulate them," AB Capital said.

BDO Nitu Sing Securities president Lorenzo Reyes said the index might hit the 2000 psychological level. "We are still looking at consolidation but a return of the 2008 level is possible," Reyes said. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

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Are Filipinos immune to the crisis?

A FOREIGN ECONOMIST RECENTLY TOLD me how surprised he was that Filipinos do not seem to be as worried or affected by the ongoing global economic downturn as everyone else. He explained that in his recent travels to various countries abroad, he has randomly interviewed persons, be like taxi drivers and hotel housekeepers to ask about how the downturn was affecting them, and he claimed that in every other place except the Philippines, people consistently spoke of either great apprehension or outright hardship already being suffered over the ongoing recession. Filipinos, he said, on the other hand, in his experience in Manila spoke of as such fear or suffering, saying, in effect, that life goes on just as it always has. What is it about the Philippines, he asked, that seems to make us either oblivious to the gravity of the situation, if not immune to the threats and problems everyone else is already seeing and feeling?

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

Finding answers

For a while, I found myself hard-pressed to offer an explanation. Are we Filipinos simply too clueless or too complacent or worry-and-take-reasonably-prepared-for? Are we too preoccupied with problems to see the possibly greater threats coming on the economic front? Is it because the wide majority of Filipinos are so poor already that things just can't get any worse? Or could it be that our economy is really so different from others that it has largely been and will be immune to the world economic mess?

Others in the conversation offered their own theories to explain the seeming puzzle, including ones suggested by the very questioner above. One said that Filipinos have become desensitized to hardship from many years of governmental neglect and opportunism. Someone else suggested that maybe it's growth of recent years has mainly benefited the well-off anyway so the economic lish really don't have much to lose now. Another opined that we Filipinos are more resilient (that word again!) than others to facing adversity. Still another believed that our economy has been better prepared by its remittances, and OFWs' jobs abroad are essentially immune (and in the case of the health service, even benefit) from the economic downturn. The explanations could very well be a case of "all of the above."

Immune jobs?

I do not feel competent to dwell on the factors that have to do with Filipinos' traits and attitudes—I will leave that to the sociologists. But I could look at possible explanations that have to do with the economy's recent trends.

Last year, the economy had slowed down from the record 7.2-percent GDP growth in 2007 to what is expected to be just around 4 percent for the full year 2008 (the fourth quarter data are due end of this month yet). And yet, as I have written recently ("Is jobless growing?," 12-20-08), employment generation never kept pace even as the economy was slowing. We observed that the statistics indicated the new jobs to have come mostly from informal sector (underground economy) work, particularly in selling and vending, and what one reader describes as hoeing and scavenging, the unrewarding, unpleasant or unstable as they may be, they are jobs just the same, and will not change much with the world economy taking a turn for the worse.

Another major source of jobs lately has been government itself, through casual employment (labeled, somewhat misleadingly as "public administration"). With government having to take the role of pump primer by filling in the spending void left by cash-strapped consumers and cautious investors, more such jobs are likely to be forthcoming with, and especially because of, the global economic slowdown.

The third biggest source of jobs last year was "private household employment," with the global downturn cited Filipino households to hire less maids, gardeners and drivers? Probably so. Indeed, whether abroad or right here at home, Filipino domestics are in for tough times ahead—and dealing with potentially large displacements here is something the country must be ready for.

Survivors, losers

Which sectors would resist the downturn? Food manufacturing, the biggest part of our manufacturing sector, could probably expect a lighter hit, if at all. After all, people need to continue eating, while lower-to-mid-range prices would help further cushion or offset the hit on the industry. With 30 long weekends coming in 2009, perhaps domestic tourism would also help offset declines elsewhere in the economy.

Who will down (own by) export industries will be the worst hit. Even last year, raising output—which is mainly exported—already showed substantial slowing from double-digit growth to double-digit contraction. Similar reversals are already happening in electronics, our top export product, and are bound to worsen further. The same is true with apparel, including footwear. Furniture manufacturers in general can be expected to decline. Thousands of jobs will continue to be lost in these industries.

Perhaps my friend's (and down) or was simply the wrong person to ask.

(COMMENTS welcome at chabito@inquirer.com.ph)

Bank closures . . .

First page B1

his company's finances during a roundtable meeting with the Inquirer business staff. PDIC president Jose Stagnilles said the deposit insurer could still end up with a net profit in 2008 at both of the deposit payout following the wave of bank closures before Christmas would fall within 2009.

Five big auditing firms accredited by the BSP have expressed interest to assist the PDIC in examining the veracity of deposit claims. The auditing firms have until Jan. 15 to submit a final proposal to the PDIC and the latter will choose three among them to hire as external auditors to speed up the settlement of insured deposit claims.

"We're talking about 120,000 (deposit) accounts that we have to examine," Stagnilles said.

Given the challenges arising from the global financial uncertainties, PDIC is seeking amendments to its charter to increase insurance coverage in the country while strengthening its institutional capability as a co-regulator of the banking system.

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Beyond just shooting

SANYO HAS CARVED A niche for itself over the years as one of the go-to brands for high quality, easy to use consumer electronics. Sanyo wants to get yet a larger portion for itself with its Xacti line of digital cameras.

Featuring the cutting-edge digital camera technology in a wide variety of shapes, styles, and functions, Sanyo's Xacti digital cameras are out to capture the hearts and imaginations of photography enthusiasts.

Stunning, full high-definition movies

The Xacti HD1000 was awarded its high-resolution MPEG-4 AVC/H.264 format, making for smaller movie files that are easier to work with. Measuring just 99 x 111.5 x 54.5 mm and weighing in 268 grams, the HD1000 fits in your hand with its elegant one-hundred-shooting design.

And because the HD1000 has full-high definition playback on widescreen HDTVs, it retains original sound clear.

Although primarily a video camera, the HD1000 is also equipped with a capable 4 megapixel still photo setting. The supplied docking cradle opens up a host of connection possibilities. By connecting the unit via USB, external hard disk, monitor and tuner can be hooked up without having to access a PC. Along with USB, the cradle offers HDMI and component video connections, for high-quality playback of movies on a connected HDTV.

If adventure is in your blood then the Xacti GH5 Waterproof camera is the one for you. Waterproof for up to an hour at water depths of up to 1.5 meters, the GH5 handles the severe better than most commercially available cameras.

The GH5 also uses high-compression MPEG-4 AVC/H.264 format.

The Xacti GH5 is highly sensitive 6.37-megapixel primary color CCD works in tandem with an image processing LSI to reduce dark noise and render skin tones more realistically.

The GH5 Waterproof dual-function still and video digital camera is right at home on the decks, at the beach, or under water. No need for a bulky separate shell.

Adopting the high-compression MPEG-4 AVC/H.264 format, the Xacti GH5 records 60 VGA frames per second with DivX compatibility for a file size of 640 x 480 pixels.

Because MPEG-4 files are small, they're easy to handle and you can fit more of them on a memory card.

The GH5 is equipped with face detection technology and can focus, adjust the focus accordingly. Automatic exposure is applied according to the area, while automatic focus captures the portion of the center of the frame.

The Xacti GH5 can record 60 high-quality VGA (640 x 480) frames per second, making for beautiful "bullet mode" movies.

The new shake-resistant mechanism helps capture crisp still images at a resolution of 9.1 megapixels. And with the Face Detect function, anyone can capture spontaneous facial reactions, even when the subject is in motion.

The resolution of files recorded on the Xacti GH5 makes it easy to upload movies to web sites and blogs, or even to postcards.

Xacti fans who prefer model cameras in the 6.1 megapixel 5000, a powerful yet compact model compared to other digital still cameras in its class.

It features a 2.4 inch color TFT LCD and a 15 frames/2s option. So digitals allowing for a clear view of the whole picture. The 5000 also doubles as a digital video camera that shoots at 30fps and 640 x 480 VGA. And as a standard in all Sanyo Xacti cameras, the 5000 has built-in Digital Anti-shaking and Red Eye Reduction technology that guarantee great shots every time.

The E1000 is said to be the ideal everyday digital camera for those candid moments. It measures just 92 x 57 x 27 mm and weighs 136 grams without the batteries.

The E1000 might be slightly tight in clothes, but it makes up for it in performance. It is a 10-megapixel camera complete with an image stabilizer function, 12x Zoom (3x optical, 4x digital), 2.5 inch display screen and is self-timer.

The E1000 it also a capable digital video camera that shoots at 30fps and with full-HD 1920 and records using AVI video format.

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MUSTARD Seed

Tech companies under pressure to go 'green'

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR is a major contributor to climate change because of the substantial energy needed to power it, thus putting extreme pressure on organizations to become more energy efficient.

This is according to Peter Hall, Senior Vice IT Advisory at consultancy firm EPRG, who cited data from research firm Gartner showing that the IT sector today is responsible for 2 percent of worldwide carbon emissions, which is about the same as the contribution of the airline industry.

It is estimated that by 2020, the IT sector—which includes computers, servers and data centers—will emit 3 percent of deadly carbon emissions, about double the current emissions of the entire United Kingdom.

The energy consumption is expected to increase by at least 50 percent by 2012. The push additional pressure on performance because companies are expected to rely more on information technology to pursue their business—but this will mean additional energy use.

And other than cost, the same companies also have to answer to the demand of investors, customers, and employees for them to be more environment-friendly, said Hall in a recent briefing organized by APC by Schneider Electric in Singapore.

"In these days of heightened consciousness of the effects of climate change, the inability to show sustainable business practices means losing customers and financial reserves.

As companies audit the energy consumption of their operations, attention gets focused on the data centers. The so-called server centers of companies, hereby referred as IT because it is here where all vital information comes together and data is stored.

Data centers, unfortunately are notoriously energy inefficient. Because only 1 of the almost 7 watts of electricity that are delivered to the servers actually goes to computing work. The rest goes to cool the servers and the servers tasks that can get hot enough to crash because of it.

The server racks are often said to be like equivalent of several room size furnaces all jammed in the size of a refrigerator.

A lot of effort is expended in the industry to improve the energy efficiency of data centers and server rooms, such as improved air flow management and containment solutions that prevent the recirculation of hot air and cold air within the data center.

The use of energy efficient economizers can also help reduce the energy consumption of data centers. Economizers take advantage of environmental conditions to help cool IT systems when appropriate conditions exist.

But Hall said that as more companies realize the impact of their IT systems on the environment, there would be a great push toward auditing the systems to determine exactly how much of the power is being used is wasted.

He stressed that the technologies needed to make the IT systems more energy-efficient are already in place, such as the proper design of data centers and use of modern cooling technologies such as those offered by APC/Schneider Electric. Companies just need to invest in them.

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BUSINESS

Legacy contagion hits Gaisano bank in Cebu

Bank owners reported to have discovered 'fictitious' loans

By Dante L. Lucas

REGULATORS RAN SHUTTERS on a Cebu-based rural bank owned by the Gokongwei family after it suffered a bank run last month at the branch of distant trade jittery by the closure of banks linked to the Legacy Group.

More importantly, the owners of the Rural Bank of Subangdaku Inc. discovered that P1.2 billion worth of loans—representing 65 percent of its P1.4 billion asset base—were either fictitious or granted by rum-agement without proper approvals.

This caused the bank to become not only illiquid but also insolvent, prompting the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to order it to stop operations and place it under receivership with the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC).

In an interview over the weekend, bank chairman Jesse S. Gaisano said at least three of SR Subangdaku's branches around the Visayas were looted either adjacent to, or around the time of, branches of Legacy Group's rural banks.

"We were affected because depositors were afraid," he said. "But we want to stress that we are not part of Legacy."

With the discovery of the fictitious and unauthorized loans, the bank's board of directors has also arranged the resignation of its president Ong C. Rustom "for health reasons," Gaisano said.

Rustom was, until last year, president of the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP), and is the wife of incumbent Lapu-Lapu City Mayor Arturo G. Rustom.

Gaisano promised not that they are cooperating with regulators to ascertain the true state of the bank's finances and to determine whether there was any malfeasance on the part of management.

The bank has been having problems servicing its clients since mid-December. It declared a voluntary bank holiday last Jan. 5.

The dismal state of the bank's finances due to "unauthorized loans" was confirmed by external auditor RG Bermudez & Associates, which was hired by the owners to examine its books.

RB Subangdaku is the latest rural bank to be padlocked after the 13 Legacy Group-linked institutions closed by regulators in late 2008, and two Pampanga-based rural banks last week.

BSP sued for closing Bicol bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE OWNERS OF BOB BANK Inc. based in Bicol, one of several padlocked last before the holidays, have filed a suit against banking regulators for alleged "grave abuse of discretion."

The owners claimed that the bank was unduly stripped off its business license and placed under receivership and liquidation.

In a civil complaint filed with the Court of Appeals last week, the majority stockholders of BOB Bank, formerly known as Bicol Development Bank, sought a temporary restraining order to halt the actions taken by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC).

They also presented allegations that the bank was solvent with the bankrupt Legacy group, claiming this was a case of "mistaken identity."

"The BSP unlawfully barred BOB Bank Inc. from operating its business, without notice and hearing, to the prejudice of the petitioning stockholder-directors who have been deprived of due process of law," the petition said.

The case was filed by Oliver Gloyhel on his own behalf and as attorney-in-fact of Arsenio Gomez and Albert Jesus Alvarado.

Aside from reversing the BSP order paving the bank out of business, the complainants said the regulations must indemnify BOB for the loss it sustained under the BSP's "prompt corrective action" (PCA) for rehabilitation.

"In almost six months from the time the BSP initiated rehabilitation program was removed, BOB remained financially sound with a P300 million, while the bank remained financially sound with a P300 million under the previous management," the petition said.

"BSP has misused the losses sustained by the bank under BSP management, as justification for closing the bank on Dec. 19, 2008."

They said that the indemnity must be set off against the amount the PDIC would have paid as insured deposits to the members.

The petition added that the PDIC must be disqualified as receiver/liquidator due to alleged conflict of interest.

"The petitioners, as stockholders of BOB, stand to be disadvantaged in the distribution of the bank's residual assets, where the liquidator [PDIC] shall be representing the debtor and the creditor," the petition said.

According to the petition, Gloyhel sold BOB Bank Inc. to Fidel Co, owner of the defunct Golden Seven Bank and Rural Bank of Bonbday Inc. claimed that two decades ago. Since then, it was downgraded to the category of rural bank. The two other banks owned by Co had suffered from a bank run and was placed under PDIC receivership and liquidation.

To avoid suffering the same fate, Co allegedly arranged the divestment of his family's controlling shares in BOB in favor of Gloyhel and his group, who took over management in October last year.

PNOC still keen on oil refining

By Abigail L. Ho

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO. (PNOC) remains keen on going into the downstream oil industry despite its exit from Petron Corp., with sites from several regional and international players for joint ventures now being considered.

PNOC president Antonio Cuñas said in a briefing that despite the lingering volatility in the petroleum sector, PNOC was still interested in possibly becoming an oil refiner and retailer.

"We're not bound by any more non-compete clause (with any refiner). We're definitely going into downstream," he said.

He said several of industry bigwigs from all over the world —including some from the Asian, the rest of Asia, Europe and the Middle East—had already gotten in touch with PNOC for possible partnerships.

In an earlier statement, he said establishing its own oil firm was one an option for PNOC before, as what Aramco Overseas Co. bought a 40-percent stake in Petron Corp. in 1994, the purchase agreement contained a non-compete clause that prevented PNOC from setting up its own oil firm.

"But last May when PNOC allowed the sale of Aramco's 40 per cent share to Saudum Group), we did so only on the condition that the non-compete clause be deleted from the SPA," he said.

Just before Christmas last year, Aramco subsidiary SEA Refinery Corp. retained its P525.7-billion payment for PNOC's 40-per cent stake in Petron.

This effectively signaled PNOC's exit from the downstream oil industry.

In Nov., growth of exports to Japan slowed down

By Rosneil N. Dantiago

THE GROWTH OF MERCHANdise exports to Japan slowed down further in the 11 months ending November 2008, growing by just 2.1 percent to $8.2 billion as confidence in the Philippines dimmed among Japanese affiliated firms.

Shipments did show from a growth rate of 9.3 percent in the same period in 2007 while a yearly poll made by Japan External Trade Organization showed Japanese manufacturers' expectations of operating profits dropped to 32.2 diffusion index (DI) points from 39.9 points.

The DI, a measure of business sentiment, refers to the difference between answers that indicate profitability will be better or poor on year and those that say the worse is expected.

Meanwhile, Jetro reported that imports from Japan increased by 7.6 percent to $9.25 billion, which was lower than the 4.1-percent growth rate seen in the previous period.

In that period, Japan's surplus on trade with the Philippines boomed at about $1 billion or two-thirds more than the previous $603.87 million.

As of end-November, shipment from the Philippines accounted for 1.2 percent of Japan's total imports valued at some $706.63 billion.

Further, Japan's merchandise cargo sent to the Philippines accounted for 1.2 percent of Japan's total exports of $724.6 billion.

In November 2008 alone, exports to Japan dropped to $646 million or 11.1 percent lower than the $720 million posted in the same month of 2007.

November imports from Japan was even worse, slipping to $870.9 million from $988 million or 23.8 percent lower.

Last December, Jetro reported that most Japanese affiliated firms are now pessimistic about their operating profits in the Philippines.

The Jetro study—which covered the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and India—defined a Japanese affiliated company as one in which a Japanese parent firm owns at least 10 percent.

As for the profit outlook for 2009, the DI for the manufacturing respondents dropped to zero compared with 12.2 points last year.

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BUSINESS Monday
Business/Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

PERSONAL FINANCE

Investment guide for 2009

CHASE Yap

By Ma. Salve Dupito
Inquirer.net

IF INVESTING HAD YOU FUMBLECUFFED IN 2008 like most individuals who put money in stocks, bonds, mutual funds and other forms of investments, you might be looking for a big rock to hide under this year hoping that when you wake up, the market has finally turned.

ALEXANDER Gotbu

Since Wall Street has begun to ostensibly dunlo widely held beliefs about investing in the face of the worst financial crisis after the Great Depression, how can a small market like the Philippines escape such a bearish outlook?

It appears, however, that the old saying about optimists and Filipinos will holds true...even in personal investing.

An online survey of Inquirer.net shows that Filipinos are not about to flinch in the lowest when it comes to growing their personal investments. In fact, they plan to invest more by spending less, keep contributing to existing plans, and continue paying for real estate purchases.

Cautious optimism

Chester Lee, an online weblog is hardly a scientific way of measuring investor sentiment and the findings are anecdotal at best. Still, they provide information that are not readily available.

"I am in my late 20s and when I saw the stock market go down more than 40 percent, I aggressively invested a significant amount of my portfolio in dependent stocks. I believe in two years' time, earnings will bounce back and stocks will rebound. After history, we may have the same losses as year 2008," says JM.

Most of those who responded echoed his outlook.

Of course, some were more cautious.

"If your timeframe is 20 to 30 years ahead, then I don't see a need to entire into. Better wait for a clear trend to emerge. Currently it is down, so stay out. Once an uptrend resumes, then enter. Bull markets take five to seven years to unfold, so to have done if you miss a year or two," says Michelle.

Chase Yap, vice president at 2TradeAsia.com, says in the fourth quarter of 2008, some investors have started to come back in the market albeit very cautiously.

He says the rallies seasons rule in equities last year has made investors lash hard at their trading behavior and it also gave them a chance to fine-tune their strategies for the future.

Rajesh also believe that 2009 will be a tough year for personal investing because it's at the tail-end of years of economic market movements.

"In my thinking, the natural movement of a market is two steps forward and one step backward. This comes from observation, not theory. It's not unusual for a market to pause every now and then. If a market does not rest, it will get sick just like a person who works five days without sleeping," says Alexander Gotbu, a chartered financial analyst.

World markets—Japan, Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world including the Philippines—were all on the way up for five or four years starting in 2004.

"That's not normal. That's like a pair walking with left foot, left foot, left foot and then right foot. Normally, markets go zigzag and if they go up non-stop, there's going to be a shift, call fall after that," he says.

Guideposts

Difficult full commitment, gains in personal investing are not impossible for the long-term especially if certain guideposts are heeded. The says there are still things that remain true even in this very bearish market, and these include the following guideposts:

1. Examine your investment objectives. Most individual investors, whether in the Philippines or in more advanced countries, are obsessed with the holy Grail of high returns without first understanding their investment objectives. Gotbu recommends finding out first if you prefer rising share prices or a steady stream of dividends or both. In the case of bonds, bond principal plus the coupon second for total returns.

"Either you need your money or compound your after year through interest or capital gains, or you want to draw down on income or cash dividends. Or you want both," he said.

But 2TradeAsia.com's Yap, the bear market in 2008 made dividend-paying stocks taboo.

"Dividends are particularly useful in a down market where

INVESTMENT GUIDE, B3

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Cha-cha will not increase

LEST WE'RE, THE MANDARIN Association of the Philippines issued a strong statement published in several national newspapers reminding the national political leadership that it should focus on the financial crisis and not Charter change.

The leadership of the Lower House of Congress has been justifying the Con-con mode for the Cha-cha by using the revision of the economic provisions in the present Constitution as a major reason. Their logic: Open up the economy and foreign investments will flow. Wrong.

Few foreign investments

The Philippines has a neighbor, a non-English speaking, communist country where there is no freedom of speech nor free press, no religious freedoms, no judicial and legal system as we know it, no code of commerce nor code of corporate governance. It received more than $9 billion in foreign direct investments (FDIs) last year. It is a restrictive economy.

The biggest country in the region with similar sociopolitical and economic circumstances received $68 billion last year in FDIs in spite of human rights violations, use of child labor, taint of products and is probably the world's biggest violator of intellectual property rights. This year, its FDIs are expected to reach $115 billion. It, too, has a restrictive economy.

The Philippines is a constitutional democracy and in this country we speak English, we have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, free press, an established judicial and legal system, a corporation code, code of corporate governance, uncensored Internet and many other

By Rex C. Drilon II

freedoms on top of profound fellowship with the western way of life.

We have pristine waters, white beaches, incredible diving sites, great schools, world class golf courses, terrific spas, heritage sites and several wonders of the world not mentioning the sunny, smiling, beautiful and hospitable Filipino people.

We received a little over $2 billion in 2007 and as of December 2008, we are told we are down 50 percent and still lucky if we get $1 billion. And if ASG gets its $3-billion price tag for Philhealth, we could go negative.

Something wrong

There's something wrong somewhere. What is the problem? Is Cha-cha the solution?

We have lessened our lessons well as a nation, particularly in the area of managing our economy. Twenty years ago, we would be ecstatic when our international reserves reached three months' worth of imports, even if this was propped up by borrowings. Those days we have reserves in excess of twelve months' worth of reserves.

In the past, we used to rely on foreign borrowings to balance our income and expenses as a nation. Now we have sustained surpluses... thanks to the $16 billion+ a year in OFW remittances, growing market arrivals, BPO dollar revenues expected to be at the $13 billion level to five years) and a revitalized mining sector. These have resulted in a decent credit rating for the country.

And, yes, even if our per capita is GDP is only $1,600, the Metro Manila Regional GDP is close to $3,000 per capita, a decent level of productivity and purchasing power.

Just like a household whose three indicators are key—cash in the bank, income exceeding expenses and a ready salary slot or a credit line in case our rainy day of money—our country is essentially judged by the amount it has in the same way—international reserves, remittable and positive foreign currency flows and access to foreign and domestic credit.

In all three areas, the Philippines scores very well, shooting to the caliber and competence of our economic managers.

We, in Ortigas & Co., which turned 77 years old in 2009, passionately believe in our country and in the genius of the Filipino to weather the storms, the present global crisis included. For example, we have invested a few billions in cupro in the last five years and we plan to invest double that in the next five years. We have grown our business 600 percent in the last six years and we target to outlive our top line and bottom line in five years time, better the multi-billion capital expenditure projects. We won't be doing this if we don't believe in the viability of our investments in this country. We won't be doing this if we do not believe that the future is bright for the Philippines. For crying out loud, if Filipinos themselves do not invest in the Philippines, how can we expect foreign investors to even look at

SA NEGOSYO,
BAWAL ANG MABAGA

Investment guide for 2009

From page B2 »

it's not easy to sell your shares for cash. Dividends give you a cash flow on your stocks and give you an option not to sell at low prices," he says.

Brokerage analyses have identified Manila Water, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Bank of the Philippine Islands and Globe Telecommunications to have good payment dividends even in market downturns. In 2007, PLDT gave its shareholders up to 78 percent of the previous year's income in dividends while SPI gave out 90 percent inclusive of special dividends.

Carefully thinking through investment objectives requires a careful look at unique individual needs. If Junior is going to college in four years' time, for example, you would need cash in the fourth year but still need to grow the remaining amount of the college pot for the following years he would have to learn his eyebrows studying. Instead of currently looking for an investment with the best returns, research the members for a closer idea what investments to choose.

"It's like looking at a car. You don't just look at the tires and the paint. You have to look at the engine," says Gilles.

Time horizon

2. Determine your time horizon. When stock investments are rumbling, it's not easy to keep a recovery image glued in your mind's eye, but over 75 years in US market history and 15 years in the Philippines show that they do recover.

"Think in terms of 10 years, not 20 days," says Gilles. Although that's conventional wisdom that US investors are beginning to doubt now because of the current crisis, Gilles and Yap insist that stocks do recover in the long term.

"For a 20-year or 40-year time horizon, you would not hesitate to get into an equity investment even in this depressed market ... Stocks go up 15 percent to 25 percent a year in a horizon of 20–40 years," Gilles says.

Yap explains that those in their 20s to 30s who will have many working years ahead of them can assume more risks and lean more toward equities and less toward bonds. The opposite is true for those in the home-stretch, say in their 50s to 60s, who should be looking more toward secure fixed-income investments.

"If I am in my 60s, I would have a good 70 percent of my investments in fixed income to have that peace of mind," he says.

Those in their 40s who have a good 20 to 30 years to work can still take some risk and should put half in stocks and half in bonds.

3. Examine your ability to take risks. Ask yourself if you can take the tension and the stress of market volatility. If you can't, stay out of the market and prepare to get by with a return of 2 percent a year from bank deposits.

"Only people who can take the stress will win. You can stick to time deposits but you will never achieve your investment objectives ... You go in there with a fearful attitude, nothing will work," says Gilles.

Knowing yourself, however, is not as easy as it sounds. Sometimes, investors who think they are risk takers find themselves shaking when the market is under severe volatility. But there are some clues. Gilles says that some indications of ability to take risks include being entrepreneurial, a liking for adventure sports, moving different kinds of people and the ability to driving fast but safe.

4. Take a view, justify it and make a bet. Part of investing is the capability to process what is going on in the economy, taking a view and making a bet. Missing other people for investment mistakes, especially in a bear market, may be what most people resort to but it is never helpful, says Gilles.

"The people who are sharing a sharp, like sure, are afraid that prices will go lower," Gilles says.

Opposites

But he explains that for the market to go lower, this would imply that the Philippines has a growing budget deficit, a growing current account deficit and capital account deficit, which it doesn't have. It would imply that the country is 80 percent dependent on foreign oil like in 1998, which it is not. It would imply that interest rates and inflation are increasing—all events that are quite the opposite of what is happening.

"Clear that the market will go down in the long-term) is usually consistent because it implies a whole set of assumptions which are false," Gilles adds. "If you are glooming ask yourself whether you have justification or whether you are glooming just because everyone else is glooming," he says.

5. Seek investment counseling. Following hot investment tips is a sure sign of amateur investing, and will burn anyone.

Serious investors go for investment counseling from qualified professionals instead of listening to hot tips.

"You cannot generalize. Some people can take the tension, some cannot. You need a deeper, customized, individualized portfolio consultancy," Gilles says.

Investors value develop short searching market volatility may either make its with the continuing readiness of time deposits or get a professional to do the driving of their investments for them.

Whether considering investments in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, bank instruments, prop-erties and other tangible assets, own business, venture capital or private equity, experts will think following sound guidelines will give good long-term returns... even in a bear market for only expected for 2009.

(For more personal finance articles, go to Money Matters at http://blogs.inquirer.net/moneymatters.)

foreign investments in RP

ion shares?

We have, indeed, learned our lessons—we have survived material loss, about nine to 12 years if not depending on who is counting, two natural calamities, the Asian flu and a few more harrowing experiences that nevertheless taught us increasingly more sophisticated coping mechanisms in times of crisis.

Competitiveness report

In preparing for this column, I reviewed the IMD World Competitiveness Survey of which I had been a part of in the last five years. They have two major competitiveness criteria for countries—the sub-criteria are in parentheses: (a) economic performance (with six sub-criteria), (b) government efficiency (with four sub-criteria), (c) business efficiency (with five sub-criteria), and (d) infrastructure (with five sub-criteria). Using these 123 sub-criteria, the Philippines has struggled with being in the lowest third among countries. There is an easier benchmark on competitiveness published by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The report released only in October 2008 showed the Philippines in the 71st place among 134 countries or in the middle third. This administration has a goal of being in the upper third by 2010 and there is a National Task Force on Competitiveness which is mandated to achieve this goal. It is a big, hairy, audacious goal and I'm not sure we can even get out of the lowest third (IMD) or middle third (WEF) by 2010. It took us three years to gain two places in the WEF ranking. How we are hoping 28 places in the next two years is impossible, if not, ridiculous—just like the goal of being first world or minimum $10,000 per capita GDP in 2009 (which means we have to grow our GDP at a compounded rate of 13 percent a year in the next 12 years).

The last time I accomplished the IMD survey I scored our country an average of 3. I use a perfect score of 6 on the 123 criteria. I was generous but every time banks like a rating for medium competitiveness. And that is probably what we are in the competitiveness game, Mediocre.

I banked on the business efficiency section of the IMD survey and rated the business sector with 4's and 5's. This was confirmed when early this year, as chair of the Corporate Governance Committee of SEC) did a survey among the membership of this organization of more than 800 CEOs and other C-level executives and the result showed that, in the area of corporate governance practices, for example, the MAP members who responded to the survey, more than 50 percent of the respondents gave their companies high marks (score of 8 or better on a scale of 1-10) in good corporate governance practices. Obviously, what dragged the average down are the 1's and 2's in the government efficiency and infrastructure sections.

Probably that's why people are shying away from the Philippines. In spite of the positives of our country and the negatives of our neighbors I enumerated in the first part of my comments (Boracay, democracy, English, etc.), we are not getting the FDI.

What is the problem? Rather, what are the problems? Is Charter the solution?

Big three

Here, I won't waste words. I'll name the Big three reasons: Corruption, bureaucratized corruption and inconsistency corruption. Let's stop denying this as we can point to many instances in addition. Disjointness, low sense of accountability, uneven playing field, arrogance, bureaucracy, terrible execution skills, etc. In other words: Ineffective government and leadership. There is also a glaring lack of a sense of urgency and respective brand image (thanks to our bungling of our officers and our free-wheeling press which gives crafty men our national glee to hell empty saber dam hall-ball).

In short, the economic provisions of our Constitution are not the reasons why foreign investors are shying away from our country. Corruption, uneven playing field, ineffective governance and leadership, changing rules, an sense of urgency, bad national and a negative country image, among others, are the reasons why. Certainly Charter change is not the solution.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. This is lifted from the speech delivered by the author to the recent business roundtable discussions with the government of the Philippines sponsored by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The author is chair of the MAP National Executive Commission and CEO of Ortigas & Co. For previous articles, please visit map.org.ph.)

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Website opens door to LGUs seeking tourists, investors

LOCAL industries and small businesses can benefit from listing their services at BayanNania.net.

CLIMBING IN ILOCOS Norte is a fifth-class municipality but its tourism potential is enormous.

Its beach resorts are now drawing tourists from all over Asia, and with the boom, the demand for tourism-related services increases. There is a need for more restaurants, spas, bus tour operators, etc. to serve both local and foreign visitors.

Other Philippine towns are known not only for their natural resources but also for their industries. San Miguel in Bulacan, known for its pastillas de leche and other sweets, is one such town.

And then there are towns known for the leisure activities they have. An example is Guiuan island in Eastern Samar, a third-class municipality touted as the country's "new surfing capital."

These towns, and thousands more, are now to benefit from BayanNania.net.

Created to become an effective tool to promote an advocacy or attraction, the new website provides a venue for a local government unit (LGU) to reduce its tourism and business providers.

Said Philip Camara, president of BayanNania.net: "We believe that there's a lot of untapped business and tourism potentials in the Philippines ... We aim to present these towns and cities to millions all over the world."

Camara said that because the website was designed for the use of tourists, overseas Filipino workers, local residents and anyone interested in contracting the services of entrepreneurs based in the area, "the benefit would go directly to the local community."

For example, those wishing to open a restaurant in Cuenca or operate a pride center in Guiuan to serve tourists will want to know who to approach for supplies, Camara said.

For that and other information, they can log on to BayanNania.net, he said, adding that the website would serve as the tourist "yellow pages."

BayanNania.net is an affiliate of HapAmerica.net, a tourist website with links to local service providers. Both sites are maintained by BizCard Inc., an IT company specializing in public-communal interactive services.

For more information, call 899-3161/09 17 8 155806, e-mail info@bayannania.net, or visit Unit 306, Roman Condominium, 1130 Claro Recto Avenue, Makati City.

BUSINESS Monday

From Aspirin to Alzheimer's treatment, Bayer shows the way

By Michelle V. Rama

COLOGNE, GERMANY—It is no secret that, for a company to stay ahead of the money-making game, it must innovate.

And for a firm that has been around for about 150 years, Bayer AG has learned to take that concept to heart.

According to Werner Wenning, chairman of Bayer's board of management, innovation entails a huge price.

"Innovation has always been the focus of our corporate strategy," Wenning said during a press conference held here recently. "That's because innovative capability is a crucial advantage in the global arena.

"We invest heavily in order to keep [that advantage]."

Having upheld the importance of innovation, Wenning said, Bayer AG puts its money where it mouth is.

Billions for research

Year after year, Bayer invests heavily in research and development (R&D) to come up with new discoveries with which to improve existing products or even roll out new ones.

In 2007 alone, Bayer invested 2.6 billion euros for R&D. The following year, the budget was raised to 2.8 billion euros. For this year, Bayer AG's board is eyeing an even higher amount for R&D, Wenning said.

To further strengthen its R&D team and to boost its efforts on coming up with innovative products, Bayer AG acquired Oliver Biotech AG, a bio-technology research laboratory in Cologne last October.

Strong performance

Also, Bayer recently tied up with the German Cancer Research Center in its bid to come up with cancer treatment products.

> In 2007, Bayer invested 2.6 billion euros in R&D. In 2008, the budget was raised to 2.8 billion euros

In the end, banking product innovations with huge investments pays off for Bayer, Wenning said during a press conference here attended by very a limited journalists from around the world.

Wenning went on to cite the company's strong financial performance over the years.

In 2007, led by its health care business, Bayer AG claims to have recovered 52.4 billion euros in sales revenues. It is still among the world's Top 10 biggest earning companies in the field of biologicals.

As for raw-material gains, Bayer AG takes pride in owning four its products—Aspirin (a painkiller and heart attack preventive), Bayer AG acquired Oliver Biotech AG, a bio-technology research laboratory in Cologne last October.

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New milestones

During the conference, Wenning announced several acquisitions that the company has made in the past year.

According to Bayer's research, there are 12 million more people being diagnosed with cancer every year. Wenning said studies like these provide Bayer the challenge to constantly come up with solutions.

Bayer Healthcare in Europe developed active ingredient called "riociguat" and "vinaticguat" to treat certain types of hypertension and to counter heart failure, respectively.

Help for farmers

As far as Bayer Crop Science is concerned, the company's researchers are working on the development of a product that will make crops more tolerant to stresses caused by too much heat or cold.

According to Wenning, this project is very timely, considering that farmers now are facing climate-related problems, putting their crops at risk.

Wenning said Bayer AG is excited about the completion of all these projects, which, once finished, would add to the company's countless achievements in the field of scientific research.

The multinational company, which started out as a dye producer in a small town in Germany in 1863, now maintains a presence in almost every country.

It is still known for its wide range of products in healthcare, crop protection and material science.

Bayer Health Care has produced the so-called wonder drug Aspirin, the antifungal cream Canesten, Adalat for cardiovascular problems, Avalox for pneumonia, Glucobay (for diabetes) and Kogenate (for hemophilia).

Bayer Crop Science has produced several pest-control products, the newest of which is Movento, which farmers use to prevent their crops.

Bayer Material Science also has been funded for technological breakthroughs and inventions. The end products are used by several industries, including car manufacturing, power generation, etc.

The company is credited for the invention of polycarbonate—a type of plastic used in the production of car seats, television sets, fluorescent mattress, shoes, etc.—among other products.

Ups and downs

Like any other businesses, Bayer AG has had its ups and downs.

Wars and sociopolitical events that erupted since the company was just up in the 1860s had led to disruptions in operations and even to its dissolution in 1945.

But the company was again put up in 1951, later branching out to other countries.

In the Philippines, Bayer AG established its presence via two subsidiaries in 1962.

The two eventually merged in 1979 becoming what is now known as Bayer Philippines Inc.

Indeed, Bayer AG already has a long history of improving people's lives, becoming one of the world's most respected multinational companies since it was put up in the 1860s by businessman Friedrich Bayer and dye maker Johann Friedrich Weskott.

But with its noteworthy dedication to innovation, Bayer AG is confident it will be able to continue doing good business for many years to come.

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INQUIRER

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LIFESTYLE Arts&Books

Art bargains in 2009?

Hard times may just force people to sell some prized pieces this year, so it may be a good time to shop for art—if you know what you're looking for, and if you can compete with veteran collectors

By Alice G. Honasan
Contributor

WILL 2009 BE A GOOD time to put money in art? If you've got the money, it just might be, as hard times may force some collectors to put prized pieces on the market. "The economic meltdown is worldwide, and people are unloading," notes Frieda Arc Flor's Vita Sarreal. "If times are harder, many will unload the old masters, but they're not going to sell the good ones first. If times get really hard and collectors really need the money, that's when the better pieces will be sold, because they move faster. All the good ones will come out and will

'Ambivalent' artists take on Amorsolo legacy

A GROUP SHOW ON ICONIC FERnando Amorsolo, "Bayan ni Kanding versus the Postmodern World: Contemporary Responses to the Life and Work of Fernando Amorsolo," will open Jan. 17 at Manila Contemporary.

Curated by Jonathan Chua, the show, according to its press release, "operates on the ambivalent responses of contemporary artists.

"It seeks to review the relevancy of the first National Artist for the Visual Arts, Fernando Cueto Amorsolo, to an

Art bargains in 2009?

From page E1

sell for lower than usual. That's why it's a bad time to sell in good times, nobody will sell their good art."

"Definitely, yes, it's a good time to buy," says tribal and colonial art dealer Hoy Quintos, owner of the gallery Boza in Manila, in reference to tribal art pieces. "Especially in my trade, they're all coming out, we're buying more than we're selling these days. Multipurpose bolong. Sadly, the tribal lifestyle is going, it will not see the end of the century. Those pieces wouldn't be released into the market unless the owners died or didn't value them anymore, maybe because they're no longer animists or have turned Christian." Then, there's the reality of social strife. Quintos adds: "You have these hard-core bonus, gold formations and other things because of the war in Mindanao. A family may have decided to just migrate to Brunei, which is just a boat ride away, or they took down the cavegate and sold the treasures. The material is becoming available because of the unfortunate of people."

Art auctioneer and aficionado Jaime Laya agrees: "It's been happening, good things have been coming out of the bud, but it's not a flood, even in paintings. You want good and cheap, and hopefully most of that will come out. I don't know how many people will invest in art, though, because they sell for poor, but some collectors will take advantage of the situation if they really want a particular artist's work, especially if it's a bargain." Times are not that hard just yet. Smyrna qualifies, because "prices are still high." For example, I have a client who's selling an old, rare piece for P2.3 million. Buyers are bargaining for P1.5 million, but the seller doesn't want to give in just yet," she says.

No big deal

Santosa notes that top collectors always have money, so a financial crisis may not be a big deal. "They're more afraid to let go of money during political crises. Regular gallery buyers are here every week. Buyers by theyre become more discerning though. It's not just impulse buying." The rule of thumb is what art is still: You invest in what is published, acceptable, and collected, and that will put you in the big level with every box collectors are really won't be allowed by the crisis," Quintos says. "There is a paucity of such Class-A pieces that these collectors—only about five of them—will already be fighting over."

Laya clarifies that in the art world, there's a difference between collectors and investors. "Real collectors don't think in terms of investing—they buy something because they like it and everybody wants to pay low prices. Even in the best of times, collectors bargain. For average investors, art is not the first thing that comes to mind." "Collectors never sell at giveaway prices," agrees Soriano. "Maybe they take off 50 percent at the most from their asked price. But there are speculators who are in the business of buying and selling, and they can make 10 times their investment in two or three years."

Of today's buyers, half are speculators and half are collectors who want to collect artists in all their phases, Soriano estimates. "Usually, art should be waiting to sell, he says. Enough there's really nothing wrong with buying a piece and considering if it can be resold." Still, as gallery owners, they would not allow prices to drop very dramatically, says Soriano. For example, a 212-ft Ang Kiukok oil may go for between P650,000 and P800,000 these days. Ocampo would never sell for below P400,000. "The market moves, but basically, you can't really do anything if an owner sells for cheaper than that on their own."

There are no such local speculators in tribal art, Quintos says. "You everybody understands it, it's not as noisy as the Sotheby auctions for paintings, and it demands a certain level of scholarship," he says of the field. "Well, there's one in Asia, but they have to buy a P1,000 ticket and say it's the same as the 6,000-carat-ruby that was just bought in Sotheby's. I'm sorry but it's very different. Internationally, though, there are a lot of speculators, for whom it's really just business. As with every genre of art, only the top level is worth investing in, if you want to sell it investments. There will always be two of the small pieces." An excellent 22-in Adzé was recently auctioned off for 5,000 euros, Quintos proudly, an important one was sold privately for 20,000 euros, about a million pesos.

Good signs

If you've just starting a serious tribal art collection, Quintos says it may not be a good time to begin, but dealers and seasoned collectors may get lucky.

In terms of gaining such provenance for distinct pieces, 2009 brings some good signs. "One of the major books on Cordillera tribal art by Eric Anderson, who has been doing a five-year study, is coming out next year, and Philippine tribal art will finally get the scholarship that it does not have. Also, the renowned Musée quai Branly in Paris, which Quintos terms elitely with, is planning a major show of Philippine tribal art in 2010.

If you've got the money, Soriano says it's the young artists you should give it to. "Their prices will never go down, and they have nowhere to go but up, so buy now. They're in demand, even in hard times. The world is producing artists all over the world, be both galleries and collectors."

"Blue people are interested in young artists, because there are a lot of young collectors more interested in contemporary art," says Laya. "Mabal na ang old masters. But basically I think the crisis will separate the men from the boys, so to speak. The good artists will survive; have a problem selling their works. It will be a matter of quality."

On an encouraging note, Soriano reveals that even the most sought-after contemporary artists can still be affordable—if you can get your hands on a piece. A painting by Geraldine Javier, who sells for at least a million pesos in outside auctions, was still be auctioned recently for P500,000. There are about 100 people on the waitlist for her works, and that's just with Finale. "Meanwhile, those kids don't really paint to sell, they want to produce good art and be collected and shown," Soriano says, also referring to the next generation of artists like Pedro Padaum, Bernhard de la Cruz, Robert Langcauyan, and others. "My advice is, if you don't need the money, don't sell your art. But if you have the money, buy young artists now, so it will only get better."

KAPITAHAN Gallery in Yuray City

Negros art space shows contemporary art

THE KAPITANA GALLERY IN Yuray City in Negros Occidental provides opportunities for contemporary Filipino artists to exhibit and share their works with Visayans.

Go there in a group exhibition by 12 contemporary artists coming from outside Negros Occidental.

Curated by Albert Avellana, the exhibit is composed of two- and three-dimensional abstract art in different mediums, such as steel, acrylic and jute.

Artists include Gus Albor, Mike Ambisida, Florencio B. Concepcion, Alfredo Hubilla, Joel Jardiniano, Eugene Jaspe, Lee Lumbre, Jinggy Pingil, Dan Rarallo, Felipe Reyes, Renante Sanchez and Mac Valdevez.

The show runs until the end of January.

Kapitana Gallery is located at Bolay or Sitio Daroog, Sti Filad St., Talisay City, Negros Occidental. Call (034)492-9436/(63) 7328000. E-mail kalapitanaall-stop@yahoo.com.

EXHIBIT is curated by Albert Avellana

"DUSK II"

'Ambivalent' artists . . .

From page E1

gressive swings. The exhibition is made up for domestic and critical responses. The former includes "modernizing" Amorsolo's themes by appropriating his iconography and creating variations of his images. The critical direction, on the other hand, looks at the infamous web of commercialism Amorsolo is mired in or by the art public. Neither conclusive nor judgmental, these responses indicate the negative effect on the nature of Amorsolo."

Artists include Ronald Achacoso, Ishi Baron Baxton, Manuel Baldemor, Ronaldo Ben Cascadio, Riri Dakota, RM de Leon, Manny Garibay, Alfredo Lioogayen, Ian Lorenzo, Fernando Modesto, Vibert Navarro, Ronaldo Olaco, Anne Pasquino, Dan Rarallo, Alvaro Pimentel, Raul Rodriguez, Igi Rodriguez, Isidro Don Saldeyrha, Judy Freya Simpson, Jay Tee, Rollie D. Tutt and Geronimo Zicarelli.

Joining them is a class of Fine Arts undergraduates from Araneta's alma mater, the University of the Philippines.

"Ten show-stoppers will," Ph. 7

Manila Contemporary is located at #Mezzanine, 2314 Chino Roces Ave., Bgang Dasmariñas. Call +(632) 8407-6208 or e-mail manilacontemporary@gmail.com.

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LIFESTYLE Arts&Books

CCP turns 40 this year with a bang

At more than 60 hectares, the CCP complex is the biggest cultural development in the world, says CCP president and artistic director Nes Jardin

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By Lira B. Zaldarra

YEAR 2000 MAY BE the best of times or the worst of times, but the Cultural Center of the Philippines is determined to celebrate its 40th anniversary on Sept. 8 as the country's premiere showcase for culture and the arts in the best way it could—with fireworks and a healthy dose of optimism.

The fireworks start next month when the CCP hosts the National Committee for Culture and the Arts, holds the annual Philippine Arts Festival (or National Arts Month).

In April, the CCP holds the National Arts Congress, to July, it holds the "Indie Month" with the annual Virgin Lolahon, which will stage new, largely experimental dramatic material, and the Sth Cinemalaya film festival.

In August, the CCP will hold an international choral festival and competition in a bid to consolidate the Philippines' reputation as "the center of choral music in Asia," Jardin said.

And in November, the CCP will hold another National Theater Festival, with drama companies coming from all over the land to stage their productions

CCP 02

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A grand–really grand–CCP experience

By Constantine C. Tejero

THE MIND-NUMBING cliché "Life begins at 40" is given a spin by people of the Cultural Center of the Philippines as it celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Its slogan: "Life begins again."

Who would have thought this institution is now approaching middle age—as a few times in the recent past it was thought to be closing down, from financial woes and moral collapse?

Considered as "the repository of the Filipino soul," the architectural icon at Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City was conceptually founded by First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos and reportedly designed by National Artist Leandro Locsin. It is opened in 1969 with an entire agenda that has since symbolized what it is perceived to stand for: lavish entertainment and budgetary profligacy (feeding the soul while emptying the pocket).

For its 40th anniversary, a new logo was designed by Francisco Duplon. The old CCP logo with the artbook motif in gray is converted by an embedding splash of red to a spinoff of 40 disturbing red circles (the ruby anniversary) with a circle of gold as central symbol.

The new logo is unequivocally inspired (has "Taken from the life of the CCP logo, this wave represents the flow of new life making its way through. As it bends onto the shore, it reveals pebbles that were interrupting its way. Yet including the arts and cultures of Philippines. At time gradually passes, these stones transform into a rock that empowers artists to create works that inspire. They [red circles]...call life of these—represent the years of CCP and how through time it has become a boulder (gold circle), the foundation that continues to support and promote excellence in the arts in our country."

The symbolic elements are well-chosen, as the iconic structure spreads an ovulated aura (and a stone's throw away from Manila Bay).

Cultural empowerment

To what the appetite of patrons and casual visitors, the host of the CCP should note will be satisfied to its galleries and hallways from February to March.

"What's you say art, automatic, stage, painting—Abad subtitle: three involvement," says Eric Salvador, cultural resource and communication services manager. "Are to kinds man ng art as consumer? Are kinds man as creator?"

So, for the anniversary programming, the focus is on cultural empowerment. Salvador conceives the activities for the second quarter as "arts transforming lives, communities, places, whether through theses, empowerment, social consciousness."

In April, the Summer Arts Workshop will be relaunched, focusing on advanced or specialized training in all CCP venues, with special training in the regions.

On April 11, CCP and its partners' organizations will commemorate Earth Day for the Fourth time, with venues ranging from the CCP grounds to the Little Theater, exhibit halls, Main Theater lobby. While last year its celebrations focused on the element of earth, this year is on water.

"Look, there is something wrong with our environment, says Salvador. "How can we transform it?"

They're inviting Albayas to help in the programs, specifically through a cultural street dance competition and showdown billed as "Ethnic Dance and Congress on the Street-Dancing Phenomenon in the Philippines," (this is an activity of the Alliance Street-Dancing Competition on April 23-25).

Performances will be at Tanghalang Francisco Aberlardo (Main Theater) on April 24 at dusk. The congress will be held on April 27 in the Little Theater and has other venues by breakaway groups.

Salvador believes street dancing is an artistic community expression that's very effective to transform the community. (Though, of course, we can learn some stuff Art by just?)

Grandiose overture

On May 8-14, a National Arts Congress will be held by the first time, at the National Arts Center in Malolos. Attending artists, cultural workers and managers are expected to "come up with concrete strategies for Arts for Transformation."

For the big event, from morning till night, music and magic will dominate the place. The building's façade will be use giant screens where images of events, performances, artists and people through 40 years of the CCP will be projected.

Inside the building, video screens on every corner will showcase "the whole breadth of performances and events the CCP has been host to." The hallways and galleries will be filled with thousands of cultural festivities, memorabilia, books, CDs, artworks.

Refreshingly up lights and sounds ang audience," Yuzon promises. "But all these are just an overture, a warm-up."

Grand performance

The institutional gala itself will comprise three movements—the fact telling the term condition of a Brahms piece by five orchestras conducted by Oscar Yuzon, the second adding hours of complexity 90m orchestras joined by soloists and chorales performing Ryan Cayabyab's Misa Cantata and finally ending with a bang, as the audience is brought to its feet in tribute to the CCP (popular singers and dancers performing contemporary pieces, then hundreds of golden clad tributed for the thanksgiving finale).

On Sept. 11, there will be a surface gala at the Main Theater, to be directed by Ana Goyen.

On Sept. 16, an internal gala at the Main Theater will be headlined by Yuzon. Billed as "Transcultural Tangkilik at Ingkilala," this is for the CCP employees, talents, foundations, resident companies, with a celebration dances at either the Tanghalang Huli or the Main Theater lobby.

On Sept. 17-Oct. 11, a multimedia and multisensory exhibition called "Dulog" at Bulwagang Juan Luna (Main Gallery) will chronicle the development of CCP as a cultural institution. It will feature full-scene videos, 3D printed panels, interactive kiosks of launch-on-education activities.

The grand anniversary a mode grandeur still in the 21 Artists and the National Artists will be enshrined on the same time.

Salvador says 3 persons of our great national product comes from creative activities. But is, from the arts community it is the role of the CCP to help raise that stake...by working the artistic excellence, professionalizing the arts, and valuing the role for social transformation.

"If we can go it present, why go to Alaska?" says Salvador. "Why go abroad to see History Bicycles or Chacha Bulgogaga perform?"

ALL THE CCP PRESIDENTS MEN—AND WOMEN. (Back row) Sonia Fe A. Ortiz, Rodolfo S. del Rosario, Bri Cabagnot, Mauro Arcel S. B. Tanenas (second row) Asuncion E. Bonoan, Lilian C. Bunoz, Nenan D. Jamin, Chinggay) Bernardo, Bernadette R. Abalos (front row) Virginia Bautista, Teresa S. Nuevo, Irma Obligacion-Pado and Eric Mari S. Salvador (PHOTO)

At around this time, the performances of National artist F. Sionil Jose's play "Tropics," on the life of society during the pre-martial-law years, will be hosted in educational institutions.

Still in the works is a project with the Korean government through Unesco which is either an exhibition or a performance of artistic children with Gawibi lion.

For the third quarter, titled "Seasons," themed operations messages, will be up for a series of galas in charge of theater genres, the Philippine Design Center, and in running the venues, with 44 core members under him, he is out to show off all the cherished tricks in his department.

The anniversary gala at Main Theater on Sept. 8 has been conceptualized as both society gala and explosive concerto, to be directed by Maestro Duque.

IMELDA Marcos

"Gabi ng Mandaong Pilipino: A Benefaction with National Artists" on Feb. 13 (8 p.m., also at Tanghalang Wenceslao Medrano) is the third season concert of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO). To be conducted by Jacqueline Dawa, the PPO will present a varied array of musical styles featuring the works of National Artists Felipe de Leon, Antonino Buenaventura, Lucio San Pedro and Lorenzo Ilanding, or "The King," the first CCP president.

On Feb. 27-28 is "The CCP 40th Weekend Arts Festival Presents and 40th Anniversary Launching Gala," under the artistic direction of Moses Esquia. It is billed as "a concert that celebrates everything surrounding us in the Filipino"—presenting Filipino music ranging from Ayuda-mas, Awiting sa mga Kalapati, Sampaguita and OPM, performed by the country's top artists whose careers were nurtured by the CCP in the last 40 years.

Throughout the month, Tanghalang Pilipino will curtain its hit comedy "Zsazsa Zaturnah (Zombie Matibabe)" at Tanghalang Huseng Batute (Encyclopedia Studio Theater). Based on the comic book of Carlo Vergara, the musical is an uproarious romp through Pinoy pop culture, with a decidedly gay perspective.

The host of the CCP's visual-arts collection in the past four decades will be exhibited for the first time for public viewing in "Buklod ng Parang Hulihe," which will run in all the CCP galleries and the fourth floor hallway for the whole month of February.

And spread out in late February and March, the CCP will present the notable productions of some of the country's most accomplished performing arts groups, namely, the Philippine Bamboo Folk Dance Troupe, Lopez Kalipayan Dance Troupe, Integrated Performing Arts Guild, Sining Kambayoka of Marawi City, Tinitong Bilalo ng Pilipinas, Barangay Kalinangan Foundation Inc. of Malolos, Bulacan; Mevo Ensemble, Stella Boro and Asociación de Samtoy, and Isla Mollino and Mary Anne Espino.

New works

In June and July, new original works will be showcased in the following: "Rainbow Festival" (June 13-14), a celebration of lesbian, gay and transgender people; "Virgin Labfest 5" (June 24-July 5), where playwrights collaborate with directors, actors and designers in staging their untested, untested and unpublished works; "Hi-Ho Body Independent Contemporary Dance Festival" (back to back with Virgin Labfest), a series of cutting-edge new works by the country's most exciting choreographers; and "Bida-Dulo Instrumentalists" (July 31), a co-production with the Metro Manila Symphony Orchestra.

Throughout June will be a calendar of literary performances.

Also in July are the Thirteen Artists Awards (TAA) and the Gawad Ng Mga Dakilang Alagad Ng Sining (GAD) for Film and Broadcast Arts.

Other events at the time are the Dance Battle and the International Choral Competition.

Yes, there will be a tribute to Her Imeldific

By Mozart Pastrano
Contributor

WHEN THE CULTURAL CENTER of the Philippines (CCP) celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, yes, there will be a tribute to its founder, Imelda Marcos—"Dahil sa iyo," a gala event on Sept. 11 to be directed by Dulaang UP stalwart Alex Cortez.

But it might event to be an entirely mimic follow-up to the "CCP 40th Anniversary Gala" to be held three nights before that, on Sept. 8, under the artistic direction of CCP stalwart Moses Esquia.

This anniversary gala will bring together five of the country's coolest, hi-tech "individual-to-you group musical harmonizers," promises the CCP Spotlight—double the fusion of Maroon Over Seven.

After the first part of the evening, the orchestra will be joined by classical singers, both soloists and chorales, in a rendition of Ryan Cayabyab's magnum opus, "Misa."

Then popular singers and dancers will go cartage with contemporary music pieces.

Here's a tip. At the finale, hundreds of goblets will be distributed for a grand anniversary toast.

But that's not all. "Come morning or evening, the CCP will resonate with the sounds of music and song"—as well as exhibitions and multimedia displays.

And that's just the start. It gets.

The year-round festivities will begin with a bang on Feb. 1, during the annual CCP Pasinaya. It's the grand open-house festival at the CCP during National Arts Month, when residual companies—Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, Ballet Philippines, Ramon Obusan Folklife Group, Philippine Ballet Theatre, The Philippine Madrigal Singers, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, Tanghalang Pilipino, the UST Symphony Orchestra, and the Philippine National Music Competitions for Young Artists)—will give a "sneak peek" of their upcoming seasons.

"It will be a grand launch," said Dominguez's Bernardo, head of the CCP's Outreach Program and officer-in-charge of the February and March festivities.

"Besides the previews, we will have 'GF Gawad' on music, dance, theater, crafts and culinary arts not just inside the CCP but also all over the CCP Complex, and even in nearby localities," she pointed out.

The usual CCP fours during the Pasinaya will also be conducted, but this time the tours will be led by professionals from the academe, the business community, architecture and even technology.

Cornerstones laying

The highlight of the launch is a cornerstone-laying ceremony of the new home of the CCP led by Bautista of Arthur and Howard CCP Awardees.

On Feb. 6-8, the "Encore Gala" at Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo (CCP Main Theater) will unfold, a spectacular showcase of the country's outstanding dance groups that will exhibit their prowess in folk dance, ballet, contemporary dance, and even street dance.

On Feb. 7, a special light-and-sound show will drape the CCP facade in various skins featuring not the different classics of the year-round celebration: "Excellence of Filipino Artists and Original Filipino Works" in February and March; "Regional Cultural Empowerment: A Flourishing of the Arts in the Regions" in April and May; "Brave New Works: Original Filipino Creations" in June and July; and "Artistic Excellence" on the last months of the year.

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CCP turns 40 . . .

Turn to page D4

to CCP literature.

The hellbender optimism is reflected in the otherwise genial and amiable Nestor Jardin, president and artistic director of the CCP. "The 40th anniversary will afford us the opportunity to showcase our achievements and provide the public a glimpse of those accomplishments through shows and exhibits that are artistic as well as entertaining."

Jardin's optimism is by no means blind. "It is income may go up and corporate support may go down, but in these depressing times people would want to be entertained," he explained.

Creative industries

Jardin is optimistic because in good or bad times, the "creative industries have always thrived."

Studies have shown that: 1) 1 percent of those employed in big establishments are really part of the creative industries. "This should show that in the arts, you have economic potential."

He has other reasons for optimism. "The fact that there's this building and it has facilities, the fact that there's this infrastructure and the competent people to operate it, should be enough basis for looking forward to the future," he said. "Progress will follow."

But if the CCP were just a beautiful structure—admirably a forbidding one for the public at large that has to be moved in the classical performing arts—then there would be nothing to brag about the fact that it's marketing it.

"The CCP is not only about world-class facilities for the arts; it is also about programs," Jardin said. "The programs are a catalyst for artistic growth."

Through the years, the CCP has developed new works that have bolstered artistic growth. In fact, its inauguration 39 years ago was heralded by a new work, a "dramarama" known as "The Golden Kundiman." Other notable works, according to Jardin, were the dance drama "Mon Ami," Lazaro Enriquez's "Divertimento," and the laughing Filipino revival of "Tulosang Bukid."

Then there's the fact that the CCP has discovered and supported numerous strains of global culture, such as Cecile Licad, Basil Jones and Ramona Arrieta.

Image problem

But, although there's much to be thankful for and long about, the CCP's massive design is a "deterrence" factor, said Jardin.

Various CCP administrations since 1986 have tried to get rid of the CCP's snobbish impressions. "Yes the ethos image is still there because of the CCP's identification with Imelda Marcos and because of the building."

Designed by National Artist Leandro Locsin, the CCP building mirrors a giant wave diving out of the sea and held in the air in suspension by the magic of concrete engineering. It's a dramatic design that's heavy or viewed as too modern, too forbidding. There's the forbidding concrete ramp for one.

The identification with Imelda Marcos may be another polarizing factor that her name is already concealed in the library books and about the last about the rules for the cultural infrastructure and other showcase buildings she had commenced (of course, with public money) during the Marcos regime, so the CCP cannot separate its association with her name, for better or for worse.

In any case, the CCP will pay tribute to Imelda Marcos in September in this run-up to the actual anniversary. The tribute is part of a series of tributes to those whose names and careers have been associated with the institution, including loyal employees of the CCP, said Irene Rada, CCP head of public relations.

The problematic elitist image is stanched in part by public relations. The CCP board, headed by advertising leader Emily Abrera, has not the cultural "Intramurals." "It be you responded long may or so helps me?"

But Jardin also emphasized that the CCP's arts programs cater to the broad public. "We have the Arts for the People program," he said. "We have more programs outside than inside the building."

Jardin also stressed that the CCP, despite its attempts at popularizing and democratizing the arts, can't abandon the "classical" arts at the risk of reducing the CCP's elitist image.

"There's still a tolerable audience out there for the classical arts," he said. "And young audiences need to be exposed to the arts."

Boon and bane

But making the building more welcoming to the broader public may be the bane of Jardin's concerns. "Keeping and maintaining a 39-year-old building is a perennial problem," he said. "Every year we discover new things to repair."

The CCP has only P26 million every year for repairing the building. Its last major repair was several years back when then Senator President Franklin Drilon gave it some money to repair plumbing and engineering problems, as well as renovate the façade, lanterns, carpets and toilets in time for Manila's hosting of a congress by Asian parliamentarians.

Jardin, who retires after two terms as CCP president in July said he's happy that he has set into motion the orchestration of the structure's air-conditioning, which would boost savings from the current central air-conditioning.

Financial management explains much of the recent success of the CCP in stabilizing and sustaining its arts and culture programs.

Jardin said the CCP leadership has succeeded in increasing contributed income. That is, income not derived from sales of tickets and earnings from rent events, but from membership, subsidies, donations and others.

"Since 2001, we have seen an annual increase in contributed income of 3-10 percent," Jardin said. "Everybody here is sourcing funds."

Jardin said the CCP is set to finalize this year the "terms of reference" for public building to further develop the CCP land. "We are looking at a joint venture with the private sector for a long-term lease of say 50 to 70 years," he said.

CCP workers ride the crest of the big wave. "We have the bounds of civic building and its facilities," Jardin says. "We also have the programs, the people, and the talent." (CONTRIBUTED)

The development of the CCP will "have its commercial and the arts." It will be commercial development but cultural in the arts, such as lifestyle establishments, cafés and events, bookshops and music stores."

The income from the development will go to three streams: a kitty for the continuation of new facilities for the arts and culture; an operations fund; and a cultural development fund.

Jardin said he will leave behind a CCP that is "more financially secure."

"I've been lucky," he said. "In the last three or four years, we have balanced the books."

He said that the implementation of the master development of the CCP complex "will spell the future of the CCP." "We must modernize our income from the land," he explained.

And with a refined development plan, a CCP leadership that has "integrity" ("this is a CCP board that cannot be pressured by moneyed conditionalities, lobbies etc."), and advisers and cultural personnel who are involved in policy and decision-making ("we have people on board who are so in love with their programs, they themselves try to look for the funding"), the CCP has much to look forward to in the next years.

Jardin said the Philippines may have experienced the turmoil and crisis that come with change and its ramifications, but its culture regime remains robust and outlining. And the wall entered 39 years ago.

"The CCP complex is 50-9 fortress," Jardin said. "We have the biggest cultural development in the world."

Redefining Manila's Architectural Scene

Evident in his projects around the world, the designs of Dallas-based architect Dine Wilder of Wilder Architects incorporated focus on contemporary architecture and landscape design that produces clean, lush and modern home experience. Established in 2004, Wilder Architects Inc. has gained recognition throughout Asia and the United States.

When asked about certain themes featured in his designs, Wilder said, "I think one consistent theme is consistently-scaled spaces. This is sometimes difficult to achieve in large-scale projects. Many times, buildings have to be a part of the city fabric and have an expression on the skyline, but we always try to remember that we are designing spaces for people to occupy."

Today's urban city dwellers are constantly on the move. They now give more attention to the comfort, convenience and beauty of their prospective residential developments. Wilder explains, "We try to develop projects that were indigenous. We want them to have a strong sense of place specific to its location. Since we want our work to be appropriate to our time, most of our work is modern and progressive."

Currently in his portfolio is The Grove by Rockwell, Rockwell Land's first exclusive residential project outside Rockwell Center. Wilder excitedly shares, "Rockwell has a very strong reputation throughout the world for developing first-class properties. And the first thing that intrigued us about the project was that it would be a Rockwell development."

The Grove by Rockwell's architectural design follows a crisp, tropical, modern style, set within a lush landscape environment. A generous amount of natural stone at the lower levels will leave residents with a warm impression. Perfect for families to spend leisure time in a safe, comfortable and well-appointed environment.

Wilder believes that the small spaces will add a level of luxury and convenience for residents, which sets The Grove by Rockwell apart from other developments. The units are designed according to Asian preferences, providing efficient, tailored and well-appointed spaces that are very functional and very stylish.

Working with him is local architect Jun Rodriguez of Pimentel, Rodriguez, Imthadan and Partners, who pioneered the 2-bit can launched in Number One Rockwell.

Set to define the skyline by 2012, The Grove by Rockwell will rise along the EIR corridor, bringing a new standard for a unique and upscale condominium living within the Ortigas area.

Dine Wilder

Architect's rendition

The wise man builds his house on rock.

Rockwell changes what was once old and grey into something new and green again. See how you can build on Rockwell.

THE GROVE by Rockwell

Along C-5, near Ortigas Avenue

Tower 1 & 2 Units are now available for sale.

LIFESTYLE Arts & Books

Filipina soprano debuts with Sarajevo Philharmonic

Gerodias performs in the New Year's eve concert of Bosnia's National Theater

By Pilita B. Tarrosa
Contributor

FILIPINA SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias, who sang the role of Lia ("Ramadan") in Vienna and Singapore, capped her list of international engagements as soloist of the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra when it held its New Year concert last Dec. 31 at the National Theater of Bosnia.

"This year has become one of the most fulfilling years for me as an opera singer," the soprano told the Inquirer during her rehearsal with the Sarajevo Philharmonic. "After my two 'farewell-dots' in Vienna and Singapore, one 'Hedermann' and a couple of one act operas of Blacher and Menotti in Manila, I was also in Spain and Czech Republic for concerts. I sang with Paul Potts in Manila and Taiwan and I am excited that I will close the year with an engagement with the Sarajevo Philharmonic."

Sarajevo, with a population of four million, is the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina which has recovered from a devastating 1992-1995 war which accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early '90s. It is now an independent state with three main ethnic groups—the Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats (Catholics) and Serbs (Orthodox).

Gerodias, who also graced several Christmas concerts in Manila, flew to the Bosnian capital right after Christmas for rehearsals under conductor Uros Lajovic who first heard her in the "Turandot" auditions in Vienna.

For the Bosnia New Year concert, she sang Adele's Laughing Song" from "Die Fledermaus," the Seguenza aria from "Le Nozze di Figaro" and Nedda's Ballo" and "Villa Song" from Lehar's "The Merry Widow."

The soprano said her 'dalk-super' Wien debut in Vienna as Lia in "Ramadan" was her most memorable for 2008. "I think I made history by becoming the first Filipina to sing a lead role in that theater," she said.

She added she had almost given up auditioning in Europe, but Filipino tenor Eliseo Gerodias encouraged her to go back and do more auditions. "He told I should be heard by the director of the Volksoper. He was positive that I would get the job. So I auditioned again and after a month, I got an invitation to perform Lia in "Ramadan."

Gerodias said she had rehearsed of performing with Gerodias after hearing him sing at the Cultural Center of the Philippines when she was still a student at the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music. "That dream was fulfilled when I shared the same stage with him in a PPO (Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra) concert with Lea Salonga under conductor Julian Quirk."

Gerodias together with conductor pianist Ariel Canes gave her free coaching/accompaniment for her Vienna auditions. Another Vienna based Filipino tenor, Abdul Gaudan, also helped her by giving her free voice lessons and hosting her in the tenor's Vienna home for almost a month.

Needless to say, the life twice blessed after her Vienna debut. "Performing at the Volksoper was beyond a dream come-true for me as I am never really that ambitious a singer. I never dreamed of being able to perform in a major opera house in Europe. I was just content admiring other Filipino singers like Gerodias and Andrea Fernandez making it in Europe."

The soprano is aware that the world-wide economic crisis will likely affect performing artists anywhere in the world. "With the ongoing economic crunch, the return is will be more difficult to find sponsors for concerts or opera and producers will be cutting down on costs and that will translate into less jobs for us singers."

What's her wish for 2009?

"I do hope there will be more opera productions that will set a higher standard for classical performers and I hope more music teachers, students and audiences will appreciate this genre and I hope there will be more venues for classical artists."

GARFIELD

AL LIPIN

FUSCO BABOY

DICK TRACY

LOVEHONEY

JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY

BABY BLUES

ATOMIC AND WEBBY

FULDEW

RIGO MACHINE

BEN

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Bread crumbs?
5 Unmodified rock
10 Many years
14 Food pantry
15 "Peter Pan" pirate captain
16 Genesis character
17 Tolkien creature
18 Convention gathering
19 Duel
20 Old-world opera
21 Color bit
22 Jewish
23 Tennis's Ivanisevic
24 Beer name
27 Most morally sound
28 Make sense
30 Kid's outlook
31 Taking to court
34 Fifteen years
41 Pocket opera
42 Sound of an animal's upbeat
46 Wings
47 Bay Area street
48 Fall down
49 Bay Bridge toll unit
50 Preserve of trees
54 Red cedars
62 Shakespearean curse
63 Better opera
64 Egyptian cobra
65 Lake Nicaragua
66 Bird's beak
67 Dark mature
68 Chain the dogs
69 Fish or lobster
70 Small opera
71 Ballroom dance
72 Ice cream grades

DOWN
1 High in the sky
2 Hebrew scroll
3 Come to pass
4 University of Western Ohio
5 Pooh, Roo's friend
6 Like chairs
7 Rules of action
8 Bellows or thinning
9 Highbrow entertainment
10 Vicious
11 Do
12 Soup
13 Went from enough
21 Time changers
23 Pool name in town
25 Letters on a cross
26 Lowly person
27 Lose interest
29 Ditch, as a car
30 Casablanca role
32 Time of day
33 Ancient Peruvian
35 Ancient Peruvian
36 Ancient Peruvian
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61 Ancient Peruvian

By John Underwood
New York, NY

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a magnet for high-voltage people and you're extremely committed to your goals. I'm sure you will make sacrifices for what you truly want. You're fascinating, talkative and full of stories. You're drawn to unconventional people and you're not afraid to be unconventional yourself. Now your ideas will be wonderfully sound. Intuition-boosting and perhaps inclined to romance.

Birthdate as Nicole Kidman, actress, and Diane, founder of Amazon.com: Jack London, author.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be friends from the past can help you in the future. It's quite friendly. It's good to have history with people. Online chats are fun.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You're surrounded by people who know you a long time. Is it natural? What does? Is it nature? What does?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Trusted friends and communications with long-ago contacts are helpful. Be careful to stay focused on the matter and higher education. This is a go for course load review.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): In the month ahead, you'll have a wonderful opportunity to grow as an individual with deep, meaningful bonds. Romance and entertainment fuel a much more productive.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Is partners and neighbors can pull you out of your shell and into the open. You could be pleased or not depending on your point of view. Your ideas are well received.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Make sure your home, emotional commitments and domestic arrangements are in order. Add decorative touches to make it more comfortable. Change.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have an ear for the unusual. Is it a new language? Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Routines might be unusual and your domestic outlay full of your fridge. You're leaving from your comfort zone. Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're in the mood for romance. Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're in the mood for romance. Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You'll have to get creative with your plans. Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things? Is it a new way of looking at things?

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Although you may be out of communication with someone, you're actually have an excellent chance to be important because if you're looking for answers from Because. Pursuit is.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

By Dave Green

	2	4				9	6	
7								8
6		9		1		2		5
	9		2		1		8	
		6	7		3	5		
	7		4		9		3	
3		1		9		6		2
8								7
	5	7				8	4	

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

1	9	3	5	8	4	6	7	2
7	4	2	6	9	3	1	5	8
8	5	6	2	7	1	4	3	9
9	7	1	4	3	5	8	2	6
6	3	8	7	1	2	9	4	5
5	2	4	9	6	8	3	1	7
3	6	5	1	4	7	2	9	1
4	8	9	3	2	6	5	8	3
2	1	7	8	5	9	7	6	4

Coming closer to home, Repertory stages 'Portrait'

REPERTORY PHILIPPINES' 2009 season begins Jan. 16 with a gem of an offering, Rolf Joergen's "A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino," easily the timeless classic of contemporary Philippine theater.

Set in pre-war Manila, "Portrait" tells of two spinster sisters who stay on in their ancestral home with their aging artist-father, in spite of pressure from other family members to abandon the old house.

The play was first staged in early 1983, by the Philippine Theater Guild (PTG), in an open-air theater amid the ruins of Intramuros.

It was Inday Avellana who first read the play in 1982 in the Weekly Women's Magazine. She later got Joergen's permission to present it — first on radio.

RTG later adapted it for the stage and it ran for an unprecedented two years.

Mark Joergen's screenplayers of old Manila, resplendent in his dramatic prose, was made more luminous by RTG's actors: namers like Amanda Goyenechea, Boots Avellana, Nick Agcaoili, Alfred X. Burgos, Sarah Joergen, and of course, Daisy — whose electric portrayal of Candida was unforgettable.

Repertory's rendition of "Portrait" is directed by Mari Avellana, Daisy's son.

Among the actors in the cast are Irma Adlawan, Ana Abad Santos, Lord Sumaran, Joel Trinidad, Randy Villanueva, Jeremy Domingo, Jay Glorioso, Odessa Dee Paz, Jeremy Santos, Alberto Abrahano, Bobby Bartolo, Chingay Morena, Lorna Lopez, Oliver Urbino, Bonggoy Mandawe, Glen Vargas, Rene Castro, Jojo Esguerra and Dingdong Bautista.

Performances run Jan. 16 to Feb. 8 at Onstage Greenhills One Theater. Ayala Malls Makati. Friday and Saturday gala are at 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinees are at 3:30 p.m. Call the Rep office at 8885758 or Tickets world at 8911000.

ANA ABAD SANTOS, who also plays Candida

LIZEL Buencan as Paula

Romantic concert at restored Almacenes Reales in Fort Santiago

THE INTRAMUROS ADMINISTration under Ramon Harper will hold a special summer fiesta, starting the music of the Romantic Period (1800-1900), at the Almacenes Reales in Fort Santiago Jan. 17, 6 p.m.

Featured artists are pianist Leljid Sala Sanmamaris and the Peace Philharmonic Philippines (PPP) Quartet composed of Reina Gerodiaco, violin 1; Sara Gonzalez, violin 2; Jeffrey Galano, viola; and Terry Gonzalez, cello.

Almacenes Reales, also known as the Royal Warehouses, was used by the colonial military forces during the Spanish, American and Japanese period. Built in 1593, as a storehouse for goods unloaded along the river wharves, it was renovated as soldiers' quarters after the 1853 earthquakes and eventually fell into disrepair.

As part of its improvement projects under the "Refining Intramuros Program," the Intramuros Administration restored and strengthened its brick walls, and photoluminate doors were installed as roofing materials; air indoor function were at the Fort Santiago. Its antique windows, balconies and doors enhance the old charm of the structure.

The Jan. 17 concert holds one of the oldest harmonies in the country will transform Almacenes Reales into a mini-concert hall with the performance of Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11 by Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) and Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 23 by Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893).

"The historical significance of Intramuros cannot be overstated," Harper said. "With this concert featuring the music of Chopin and Tchaikovsky who lived during the glorious years of the Walled City, we hope we can impart a bit of previous history among the younger people of the new generation."

The Intramuros Administration is an attached agency of the Department of Tourism with a mandate of preserving, maintaining and improving the remaining historical sites of the Walled City.

For invitations on the Jan. 17 concert at the Almacenes Reales, call 5215035 or 5272128.

INGRID Sala Sanmamaris with the PPP Quartet

New Year titles from New Day

GET YOUR HALF DOSE OF soul-uplifting words from "The Upper Room" Bible devotional book from New Day Publishers.

The bestselling Bible reading guide is an international and interdenominational material used by more than 10 million families worldwide. It is named after the room in the house where Jesus Christ and his disciples met for prayer and where he instituted the Holy Eucharist.

It contains simple and practical guidelines by Christian living based on personal experiences of ordinary people touched by God's faithfulness and providence.

Other New Day titles are andrew lecompte's "50 Ways To Be a Better Life" and Jerry Mischiatti's "52 Things You Can Do To Raise Your Self Esteem" and "Thinking Better."

Survive the daily grind of life in the office and at home with practical and witty tips from John Byrne's "Survival Tips At Work" and "Survival Tips for Students," and Liz Balde' "The Thing About Calories," "The Thing About Stress," and "The Thing About the Office."

Find new ways on enhancing mental life with Vicki Nelyn in Make The Most of Your Marriage" by Julie Jaramillo and Lucy Bellock. Tickle your funny bones with the Philippine comic books, "The Best of Pugong" by Tristan "Pugong" and "Bubbz & Co. 3" by Rom Barrameda.

Call 910-8045 or 927-3982. Visit www.newdaypub-lishers.com.

'Basyang' magic, and other ballet yearenders

By Rhia Reyala R. Requiroso
Contributor

BALLET MANILA (BM) RECEIVED AN overwhelming standing ovation during the world premiere of "Tatlong Bituwing Lo-la-Basyang" at the Aliw Theater.

All-new choreography, brilliant dancing, music by acclaimed artists and leading contemporary composers in this homage to ballet trilogy seemed to have been dwarfed by spectacular lavishness, from the sophisticated-looking lighting design by Jimmy Villanueva to the lavish sets and elaborate costumes by Jonathan Jamito. The designs were all based on Francisco Alcuaz's colorful illustrations in the Anvil Publishing edition of three well-loved fairytales/Filipino classics.

Reviving veteran Lei Fernandez reprised her role as Lola Basyang and narrated bits of the stories for each act in Filipino. She is joined by several children and RBI artists directed Lisa Macuja-Elizalde, who did more acting than dancing as the prima ballerina took a step back from starring roles this time. She served as the "dancing narrator" (think Gene Kelly-Jerry in "Funny") and looked incredibly (and constantly) anxious especially while watching her first creative piece.

"Ang Kapatid ng Tatlong Bituin," Macuja-Elizalde's pilot venture in choreography was a successful collaboration with Onin Barrios, Bienvi Manday and Deiardo Francisco. Being rich eclectic music that was especially created for "Basyang" by contemporary musician and composer Joey Ayala, the upbeat steps had the Lumen Maagan-Mindanao and southern-voices vibe. And they were adeptly executed by Alvin Santos as Pedro, who was searching for his three sisters, Mylene (Agatha Pajeng), Erin Cuaco (Lolong) and Anne Karen Cabrera (Tenang).

Enid Bluebell as Princess Singsing and Rudy de Dios's Prinsipe both seemed overwhelmingly painful expressions as they hammered herbidden love in Barrios's overly romantic "Ang Dalawang ng mga Ibon." Barrios was able to create a fine tapestries using handloom and other Filipino classics (arranged by Alan Buencisi) from genres such as Visayan Abaloshi, Lucresia Kasilag, George Canseco, Levi Celerio, and Antonio Buenaventura.

"Ang Pabalita Nang Mahiwagang Biyulin" was the Bring Brale Marvin Tolentino as the greedy Ahab and Pancheco as the industrious Bodiger made the audiences laugh with their funny antics throughout the third act — especially when Francisco started using the violin (it forced people to dance quietly to an catchy tune) on Tolentino as the latter would aptly pay him back for the service that Bodiger rendered under his employ.

With the production's (extended!) three-week run, it was obvious that BM has created another magical, must-see hit.

LIZ FERNANDEZ as Lola Basyang with Macuja-Elizalde and BM's kids

WELL-APPLAUDED: Jurrius and Tan in BM's "Modern Beatitudes"

Pavillons

Philippine Ballet Theater's (PBT) "Modern Beatitudes" at the CCP Main Theater was nothing like the national icon we learned about in cultural books.

Somehow, former Cultural's well-applauded arranging of his 1996 full-length piece inspirational from a jury retelling of the plight of the hero into a romantic story about Andrew Bonifacio and his wife, Gregoria. This time, especially when the gala opened on the night of Andrew Aquino's birthday, "Andrew" could even be related with the struggles of Aquino as continued by his wife, Cory.

Lucas Jurrius's dashing Andrew passionately wooed Abigail Tan's strong Gregoria. To the delight of the audience, there were lots of giggle-inducing lifts during their Act 1 pas de deux, which they made to look flowing and light, as if in unison. The room applauded Jurrius when Jurrius balanced as outstretched Tan with his feet while he was flat on his back and his legs formed a right angle in the air.

Hailing from a family of dancers, Jurrius's lengthy frames been dancing did not deny his princely demeanor and grace. His tour jetés were marvelous, but there were times when he looked a tad too heavy.

The booming ethnic music and lights were seamlessly in sync, as were the sharp movements of very expressive male and female corps. The production design and costumes were a vast improvement from past productions, making the monthly patriotic "Andres" PBT's best production this season.

Contemporary dance

On the other side of the dance spectrum, The Lovergaypoint "We will be waiting at the turning" at the all-white Pioneer Studios in Mandaluyong City was very much Filipino's relatively inclusive and artsy crowd enjoined to the group's European-influenced performances.

In varied levels of energy, choreographer Ivanna Miranda jumped, crouched, swayed, ran, twisted and crawled across the floor with Ariel Lauzon and Clarissa Alfonso while a silent video by John Torres and Martha Atienza was being shown in the middle of the room. Rita Matos and Arthur Bagon mix synthesized music live.

At some point, they read off their own musings on performing, plus newspaper-inked clippings and a quotation from Slavoj Zizek, the Slovenian philosopher.

The piece centered on the concept of intimacy and how it is physically and visually embodied by both the performers and the viewer. It was originally created in a commissioned piece for one of the activities of Goethe Institute-Manila.

Miranda has collaborated with Ballet Philippines (BP) and Myra Beltran's Dance Forum. She has had specialized training in contemporary dance at a dance program in Vienna, Austria and has received numerous international awards and citations for her works.

JM will be regularly performing "Basyang" on Saturday starting Jan. 24 (tickets at only P750). It ends its 12th show with "Mr. Tchaikovsky Challenge" on Feb. 13-22.

BP concludes its 20th season with "Neo-Filipino" on Mar. 12-23. PBT opens its 20th season with "Serenade at Berenger" in July, followed by "Mr Bixio" in September and "La Fille Mal Gardee" in November. Also in March, the Lovergaypoint will perform "Promises are made to be broken" at the Great Hippos Art Projects in Biñan, Quezon City.

FROM BOOK TO FILM

'Curious' changes in 'Benjamin Button'

By Jordan Mian S. De Leon
Contributor

IN THE 1994 film "Forrest Gump," a man successfully embarks on an epic journey across the 20th century despite his mental retardation. "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," loosely based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story tells a somewhat similar tale, but the difference is the "disability"—Benjamin ages backwards as he journeys through life.

He begins life with one foot on the grave and then grows "younger" over the years, passing middle life, adolescence, childhood, and finally infancy.

Daisy (Cate Blanchett) is on her deathbed in a hospital in New Orleans, as hurricane Katrina approaches in 2005. She asks her daughter Caroline (Julia Ormond), to read to her the diary written by Benjamin Button (Brad Pitt). From this point on, the story is then told from the perspective of Benjamin and in his own voice.

Benjamin is born "under unusual circumstances." Although newborn, he has the physical appearance of an 80-year-old man. Horrified by the sight of his son, his father, Thomas Button (Jason Flemyng), abandons him on the doorstep of a retirement home where he is adopted by Queenie (Taraji Henson), who also gives him his name.

Over the course of time, Benjamin "grows younger" and also meets his first love, a young girl named Daisy, whose grandmother lives in the elderly home. Eventually the two part ways as Benjamin goes on to work on the tugboat of Captain

BENJAMIN Button (Brad Pitt) is born old and grows up young; young enough to reconnect his elderly childhood friend, Daisy (Cate Blanchett).

Mike (Jared Harris). He becomes younger as each year passes and goes on a colorful journey that involves having an affair with Elizabeth Abbott (Tilda Swinton), whose husband is a British spy, establishing a close relationship with Thoreau, who later reveals that he is Ted Colby, and falls in love (resulting in World War II with Captain Mike.

Upon returning home from the sea, Benjamin rekindles his romance with Daisy. But they face a greater challenge of career being able to grow old together as they age in opposite directions.

Curious changes

Directed by David Fincher and written by Eric Roth (who wrote "Forrest Gump"), the movie adaptation is significantly different from Fitzgerald's short story. However, the three are bonded by the fact that Benjamin's reverse-aging story is beautifully told.

In the original story, Benjamin is not abandoned but reluctantly raised by his father, Roger. The setting is also changed, from a 19th century Baltimore in the story to New Orleans in the movie.

Moreover, Benjamin's character is portrayed in the film as nothing short of amazing. From an old man becoming a 25-year-old drunkard, Pitt delivers beautifully. The only thing peculiar about Pitt's role is that it is difficult to imagine him portraying a man in his mid-seventies since the hairdo, scary hair and the slight effects on his face.

On the other hand, Blanchett's Daisy radiates beauty, leaving no doubt as to why Benjamin continues to pursue her despite her aging, making it appear that that's really his life's quest and nothing else.

But the original story is significantly different. In the film, Benjamin vows to Daisy that he would continue to love her even as he grows "younger" and as she grows older. This is highlighted in the film when Benjamin, chronologically aged 60, plus but looks 20, shares a passionate night with the elderly Daisy. In Fitzgerald's story, as Benjamin grows younger, he becomes less attracted to his loyal and wife, whom name is Hildegarde. As a "young" man, he would continually leave his old wife ahead of the time to party and flirt with younger women, who share the same age as his youthful looks. In other words, the original story depicts a more human Benjamin, one who gives in to worldly temptations.

In the story, too, Benjamin grows up in different circumstances. He goes to Harvard, plays college football, and gets married, among others. Also in the short story, Benjamin is already talking, acting and dressing like an adult a couple of hours after he was born.

The characterization of his father in the original story and the film also differs drastically. If the film portrays a father who hated his son's physical appearance but showed concern in the end, the original story, on the other hand, depicts a father who raises Benjamin but nonetheless leaves him to act according to his chronological age.

Picturesque epic

Although the original short story is only roughly 12 chapters long, the plot in the film is portrayed into a magnificent two-and-a-half hour epic that features several picturesque scenes with Benjamin—experiencing his "first time" at the age of 20 years, though he looks no less than 65, then later riding a motorcycle at the age of 50 but with the ruggedly handsome looks of a young adult.

Perhaps one drawback in the film is that it shows only one main scene involving Caroline and Daisy in the hospital where the former reads out Benjamin's diary. It somehow makes viewers disconnected from the main plot, which is Benjamin's backstories.

Nevertheless, it's a rare and liberating plot—the reminder of aging backwards, intertwined with love between two people who are growing old in opposite directions—it's about the wonders of love, old age and frailty, and above all, love's timelessness.

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Editor Ermie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

'Dexter' siblings wed

NEW YORK—TWO OF HOLLYWOOD'S MOST GUARDED COUPLES, "Dexter" lead star Michael C. Hall, 37, and Jennifer Carpenter, 29, are husband and wife. Hall's spokesman, Craig Bierko, said on Friday the couple eloped in California on New Year's Eve. "They will make the red carpet together at the Golden Globe Awards today publicly displaying their relationship for the first time. 47

DID YOU KNOW...

THIS birthday message ended years of estrangement, but birthday girl says the biggest thrill was the presence of her husband, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, and their kids Frankie and Miel (above R) and eldest daughter KC (below).

The Perfect Gift All YEAR ROUND

ROBINSONS MOTHERWORLD

Prepaid card

Gabby greets Sharon

... and the Big Dome crowd hits the roof

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FOR FANS OF THE SHARON-Gabby love team, it was fantasia — to put it mildly.

Sharon Cuneta cracked her 43rd birthday at the Araneta Coliseum on Friday with a show featuring big-name guests in mind, including Juvel Pineda, Joanna Padilla, Jean Ledesma, Gary Valenciano, Ai Ai de las Alas, Vina Morales, Sarah Geronimo, Rachelle Ann Go and Piolo Pascual.

But the show-stopper was a videotaped message from San Francisco, California, from ex-husband Gabby Concepcion.

In her part-time birthday shows, sitcom partners like Richard Gomez and Robin Padilla would invariably pave Sharon; Gabby was always the 30th person gunfire on our dated reunion concerts.

Until last Friday. Gabby's videotaped greeting (he is vacationing with his family in the US) dented the apprehensively 30,000 spectators, but only for a while.

Suddenly they were women. The clowns were on deskilling, it completely drowned out the greeting. "I thought the stage would collapse," Sharon later confessed to her shouting fans.

Earlier, a TV interviewer asked if that was a tear he saw falling from her eyes after Gab-

(SHARON 11)

ASSUNTA de Rossi

Assunta: No, we did not

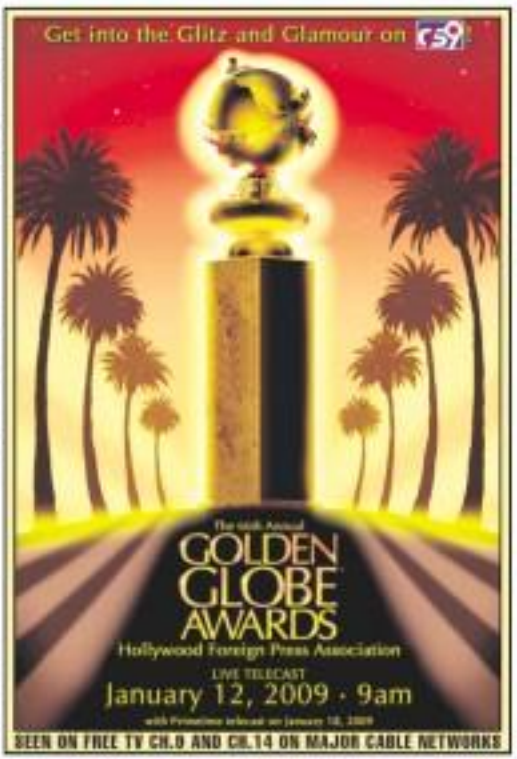
By Philbert R. Dy

ACTRESS ASSUNTA de Rossi has denied the rumor that she and husband Jason Hernandez have split up.

Assunta, who is married to Hernandez, a businessman, said on Friday that she and her husband "are still very much together."

"We're still married. We have been committed to preserving the relationship. I don't have to explain anything to anyone. My obligation is to God and to the person I exchanged vows with," the actress told Inquirer Entertainment.

(ASSUNTA 11)



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GALLERIA

1 TWILIGHT
2 TRANSPORTER 3
3 THE SPIRIT
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8 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
9 DESPERADAS 2
10 ISKUL BUKOL

ERMITA

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NOVALICHES

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4 THE SPIRIT
5 TRANSPORTER 3
6 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT

PIONEER

1 THE SPIRIT
2 TRANSPORTER 3
3 BEDTIME STORIES
4 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON

STA. ROSA

1 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
4 ISKUL BUKOL
5 THE SPIRIT

LIPA

1 THE SPIRIT
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
4 DESPERADAS 2
5 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 9

DASMARINAS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
4 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON

IMUS

1 ISKUL BUKOL
2 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
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4 TRANSPORTER 3
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ANGELES

1 THE SPIRIT
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4 BEDTIME STORIES

STARMILLS

1 DESPERADAS 2
2 THE SPIRIT
3 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
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BACOLOD

1 THE SPIRIT
2 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
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4 TWILIGHT
5 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
6 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

ILOILO

1 BEDTIME STORIES
2 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
3 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
5 TWILIGHT / THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL
6 THE SPIRIT

Gabby greets Sharon

From page 1

by's message. Sharon jokingly replied, "Ha, that was swear!"

It could henceforth be known as the birthday greeting, publicly ending years of estrangement between the former and their middle guarters release union, produced a string of box-office hits, and 22-year-old daughter KC Concepcion, star of "Full-Bodied" singer-actress-hood.

Sharon greeted Gabby's present with, Sometimes, and their daughter Samantha onstage.

But to set things straight, Sharon pointed out that, for her, the most touching part of the birthday show ("Songs of My Heart," aired yesterday on ABS-CBN), was the videotaped message of her current husband, Sen. Freddie Piangdiman, and their two young daughters Frankie and Miel, who were in the audience.

"I could feel their one their really wanted to see me happy and my family complete," she explained. She hoped her family's presence that night would hopefully end all speculation about her marriage.

KC thrilled

Late last year, the Pangilinans' removed separation hopped between them. Sharon admitted that they had a rough time at that time, but that it was blown out of proportion. "GA (now acting) ego."

KC since again performed a perform stint during the program, a jazz number with the G Force dancers, done while she balanced on a one-sure. Last year, she "flew" while attached to a harness.

Did the thrill of hearing Gabby greet Sharon surprised mom reddarening for KC. "Peace at last," KC told reporters.

Assunta: No, we did not

From page E1

Wednesday.

The rumor came out shortly after actresses Ina Calzado and Julia Montelegre confirmed splitting up with boyfriends Joey Lucas and Solvang Muller, respectively, during the holidays.

At the press conference for her TV show "U Women," Assunta pleaded movie artifacts coop with ing about the rumor. "We're together. You go on women ang sandwich-in siya. (That will still be top scorers.)"

She said they celebrated their anniversary in Negros, in time for the blessing of the Ledesma's ethanol plant there. "Ski there a party for the people who worked at the ethanol plant," she added.

No perfect relationship

Assunta went on to say that there's no such thing as a "perfect relationship." "My mommy tells me that she and daddy have been married for almost 30 years but they still have petty fights."

The TV-hotline actress said they celebrated Christmas with Jules' kids Cristina, 16, and Carlo, 6, in Manila because her husband was too busy with work. "He didn't have time to go abroad so we just decided in a hotel and stayed there for five days," she said.

She said she hopes to have a baby with Jules this year. "I leave everything to God. Maybe he does not want me to get pregnant yet. Just wake pa kaming catching the bay. The year, if Jules finishes all his obligations to his clan, maybe we can start a new chapter in our marriage as a home (Sana) we can." Until the baby comes, Assunta said she would keep herself busy with shows his commitments.

Assunta is part of "U Women," the local franchise of the Female TV show "What Less Feminine," that will premiere on GTV 23 tomorrow. Directed by Mark Meily, it is the show that "makes you minute – comedy show "Camera Cole." It will air on weekdays at 10:05 a.m., 2 p.m. and 9 p.m.

"Shooting on the show is physically draining. We start at 7 in the morning. We transfer from one location to another and we can't eat proper and restroom," she added.

"U Women" also stars Candy Pangilinan, Beatrix Vargas, Kelly Ignalus, Christian Vasquez, Arnold Reyes and Gerhard Acao.

E-mail: ncruz@inquirer.com.ph

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

METRO MANILA THEATER ASSOCIATION

NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 BEDTIME STORIES
2:20, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50
2 BENJAMIN BUTTON
PG-13
2:30, 6:00, 9:30
3 THE SPIRIT
PG-13
2:10, 4:35, 7:00, 9:30
4 TRANSPORTER 3
PG-13
2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30
5 BENJAMIN BUTTON
2:00, 3:30, 9:00

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BEDTIME STORIES – GP
BEDTIME STORIES – GP
CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON – PG13
THE SPIRIT – PG13
CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON – PG13

AT THE CINEMAS

ALABANG 1	1 BEDTIME STORIES	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	3 SPIRIT	4 TRANSPORTER 3
ALABANG 4	1 SPIRIT	2 TRANSPORTER 3	3 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	
	4 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL	5 DEVIL RUNOL	6 BEDTIME STORIES	7 AND TAKING HA WONG LAHAT
GREENBELT 1	1 BEDTIME STORIES	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON		
GREENBELT 3	1 BEDTIME STORIES	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON		
	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	4 SPIRIT	5 TRANSPORTER 3	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 BEDTIME STORIES	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON		
	3 SPIRIT	4 AND TAKING HA WONG LAHAT	5 TRANSPORTER 3	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	2 BEDTIME STORIES	3 TRANSPORTER 3	4 SPIRIT
MARKET! MARKET!	1 TRANSPORTER 3	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON		
	3 BEDTIME STORIES	4 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	5 SPIRIT	
TRINOMA	1 AND TAKING HA WONG LAHAT	2 DEVIL RUNOL	3 SPIRIT	4 TRANSPORTER 3
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AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta

Greenbelt

Ayala Malls Westcomm 2009 Sale! Jan. 2-18, Mallwide

Ayala Town Center

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Market! Market!

Ayala Malls Westcomm 2009 Sale! Jan. 2-18, Mallwide

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Ayala Museum

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Tri Nona

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Ayala Malls Westcomm 2009 Sale! Jan. 2-18, Mallwide

Buy 4 tickets of any movie in a single purchase within the promo duration at Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 1 & 3 cinemas, and get a chance to win a new watch, free makeover or a free trip to Boracay. Palawan good for four!

Glorietta Greenbelt

Regine Velasquez Live! January 18, 2009 Activity Center, 8pm

Watch Regine Velasquez live at the Activity Center as she performs songs from her latest album, LOOKING UP!

Glorietta Greenbelt Ayala Center Cebu Ayala Museum Market! Market! Tri Nona

Young Pinay to launch album in Geneva

By Pichola Concepcion

BIG BREAKS KEEP POURING IN FOR Filipino artists in different parts of the globe.

In Switzerland, 11-year-old Liza de Guzman has recorded an album produced by Paul Jasmin, a record label owner and associate of British pop star Phil Collins. The album will be launched next month in Geneva.

To introduce her to the international market, Liza will grace Midem (Marché International du Disque et de l'Edition Musicale), the world's largest music industry trade fair, on Jan. 18-21 at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes, France.

Also in February she will perform alongside ABBA in a festival homecoming Princess Lisa of Belgium.

To promote her album, Liza will have a US tour in June.

The 20-track, all-English CD has two songs which Liza wrote herself. The earlier single, an upbeat tune titled "Pursuit Now Gay," has a Tagalog version (lyrics by Noel Cabangon) which will be a bonus track when the record is made available in the Philippines.

LIZA de GUZMAN

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

After spending the holidays in Davao, her parents' home province, Liza—born in Geneva to OFWs Rose and Joy de Guzman—visited the Inquirer office and shared details about her good fortune.

Her achievement was the result of a long process of penning a demo that began at age 5. Liza fell in love with singing after watching a video of Disney's "Little Mermaid."

Liza's folks gave their all our support and enrolled her in music school. Soon she was being asked to sing in gatherings, big and small.

In 2006, Liza became the first Pinay to perform in a special program on Television Suisse Romande (TSR), said to be the biggest TV network in Switzerland.

On her return to TSR for another show, Collins and wife Orianne, who ran Dubai real estate, announced that Liza had been chosen to be part of Little Dreams Foundation, which the couple had set up to train young talents.

Liza still remembers what Collins told her that day: "Just go play, Magnifico!"

When the Collins couple divorced recently, Liza, her mom related, was asked whether she wished to remain with the foundation or join Phil, who had other plans—one of which was to groom Liza as a young pop star. Liza opted to follow Phil and this was how she ended up recording her debut album.

The album also includes harmonized out-especially versions of a generous profit sharing arrangement between the producer and Liza. Part of the package is a booze and for her Lizzie Geneva.

Piolo Pascual raves about Bukidnon

PIOLO PASCUAL FELL IN LOVE with Bukidnon while shooting his movie "Love Me Again" with Angel Locsin in the province. It is about two lovers whose romance is rudely interrupted by economic necessity.

"Bong Revilla [the young cabinet member] is a good friend of Governor Jun Emano," said PA. "There he invited me and we had a good time. We visited many natural things to enjoy like mountains, greens and lakes [along Cagayan de Oro]."

During the last few days of their shoot, PA opted to sleep in the only house in the middle of the mountains. He then presented with a week-long fasting, which ends Jan. 15. Today happens to be his birthday.

PA's got it all but he likes to keep it simple. Ah! The incredible uniqueness of being Piolo Pascual!

Not ready

Karylle is blue about Jackie Rice-shire' admission for her. "Honestly, at this point, I'm not ready for anything beyond friendship," says K.

After the Dingdong Dantes drop-out in her life, it has gone during in her personals but her heart remains on-stone. Ready is willing, heart is ready!

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Sweet treat

As a close friend of Dingdong Dantes, I can vouch that sweetness is in everything he does. So it's only fitting that he introduce the sweet treats of Goldilocks (5% his 3 favorite Mas in the World works hard to stay in shape but not to the point of deprivation.

"On the days that I indulge in my cravings, I go for Goldilocks." As the new endorser of the Pinoy bakeshop goes, "You're the one."

Will he be saying that to Marian Rivera anytime soon? "Maybe by Valentine's Day with matching cake," Dong quips. "Reminds to remind."

Dong can now have his cake and eat it, too.

RP journey

Arnel Pineda is all agog for the world-touring concert of his band Journey on March 14 at the Fort Open Field. "My bandmates have been asking me about the Philippines," Arnel says. "I hope we will have enough time [to] explore the city and they will be game on managing fans! or habit one Tagalog song as encore."

So "we definitely taken Dove's talent in the forefront of the music scene.

Back-to-back concert

Pops and Martin fanatics are rooting the days till their back-to-back con-

PIOLO Pascual raves on the makadance of Bukidnon where he was conferred the honor of being an "adopted" son of the province.

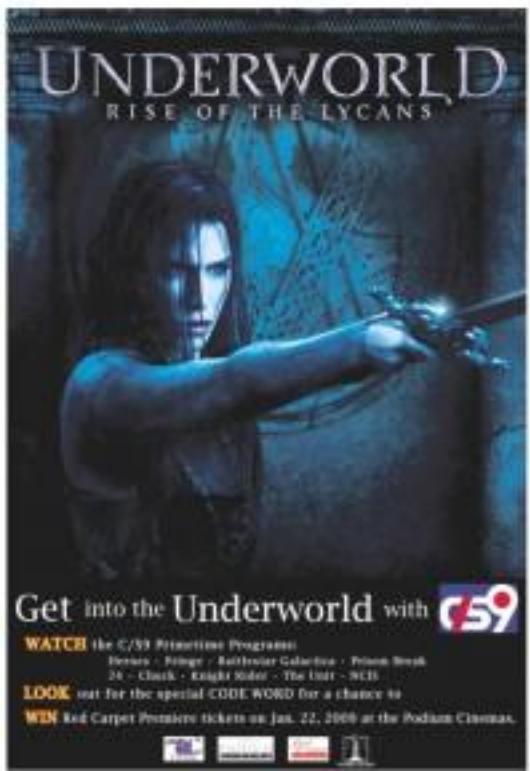
cert "Hitting Yet" on Feb. 6 at the Big Dome. Sons Pipay's boyfriend Jessanel Ybanez (who's producing the concert) can hardly wait for it.

Seeing Pipay and Mart together again (or singe will bring back wonderful memories. Like when we had golf tournament in Alabang. Pops took up golf because Martin was so into it. Even in the golf course, she was quite a babysitter. "If you can't play, display," Pipay used to say.

Martin and Pops can no longer be able to relive those moments but even just for one night, they will recapture the joy through their songs.

PEDDLERS. Birthday hugs to my dear friend Vivi Carrasco of Hong Kong Express Airways.

E-mail: sosie.bgh@yahoo.com; boy.com



LEARNING

Educ Central and Forever

DR. PEDRO Balcong of Dagupan City rushes to meet the leading forces to ask medical assistance for the wounded.

Glory days of Filipino honor and valor

Though many people today seem totally lacking in integrity and ethics, WWII showed the Pinoy had it in him to sacrifice self for the greater good

By Linda B. Bolido

MANY YOUNG Filipinos today probably find a major disconnect between what they are taught in school and what they hear, read and see in mass media.

Integrity, honesty, valor, respect for law and authority seem to be more honored in the breach than in the observance.

While Filipinos have always been inordinately fond to bitch and bim, now "brodkonyl" love appears to have broadened its scope to include not just friendships, with allegations that a lawyer of some affluent accuses to a high-profile drug case drafted their release order, relying on fraternity connections to get the Department of Justice to sign it.

It seems easy to believe that it has always been the nature of the beast that is the Filipino to be crown, corrupt, dishonest, disrespectful of the laws and civil ways on the lookout for an opportunity to put one over some hapless person.

That is why for former President Fidel V. Ramos, events such as the recent commemoration of the landing of Allied forces on Jan. 9, 1945 in Lingayen Gulf in Pangasinan, was an opportunity to remind the nation of the glory days of the Philippines, when Filipinos showed courage, selfless, and a tradition to sacrifice—even die—for a noble objective.

DR. GODOFREDO Reyes of Iloilo Sur was with the USAFFE medical corps.

A duty

In a speech read for him at the Lingayen event by Sec. Benjamin Lim of the fourth Special of Pangasinan, Ramos said, "It is our duty, and is must be a legacy for us, their elders, to keep on reminding them (young people) that the Filipino race is capable of great deeds. Their grandparents did it. Their parents did it. My parents did it."

Ramos said it is to tell the valor and heroism of those who fought in World War II (WWII) "is not to be engaged in idle homage. It is, in fact, our duty to renew in ourselves the strength to keep improving and maintaining that beloved nation we inherited from them."

History professor Ricardo Jose of the University of the Philippines Diliman, the leading Filipino authority on WWII, said the Lingayen landing brought United States forces to Luzon, after the landing on Leyte.

"The Japanese forces in Luzon were sizable ... Manila and all the Luzon cities and towns were still under Japanese control, and the cities in particular were feeling the impact of Japanese occupation through severe

We're looking for true stories from World War II

The Philippine Veterans Bank and the Philippine Daily Inquirer are pleased to announce the 2008 WWII True Stories Contest.

The competition aims to uncover stories about the personal experiences of the men and women who served during the Second World War, as well as other individuals who lived through the open conflict through their own accounting. The contest is intended to show that students have interviewed, researched, learned about and understood the subject and formed their own narratives.

The contest is open to all Filipino students 13 to 19 years of age attending public or private high schools in the Philippines. To compete, a high school student must:

1. Personally interview a WWII veteran or any person alive during WWII about his/her experiences during the war era.

2. Write a narrative in English that tells in a maximum of 1,000 words the interviewee's story, including important details and quotes from the interview.

Each narrative entry should be an original, unpublished, logical, cohesive and flowingly developed narrative written by one student. It should be accompanied by the entry form below (no photocopies allowed) fully accomplished and glued on a sheet of paper that serves as cover page.

The first place winner will receive a laptop computer and a premier plus ATM savings account of P10,000. The second place winner will receive a desktop computer plus a PNB savings account of P7,500. The third place will receive a digital camera plus a PNB savings account of P5,000.

Entries may be submitted to any Philippine Veterans Bank branch nationwide by 5 p.m. of March 14, 2009. Winners will be announced on April 1, and awarded April 6, 2009.

2008 WWII True Stories Contest

Official Entry Form

INQUIRER veteransbank

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Philippine Peace Corps alumni mark silver anniversary

THE PEACE CORPS ALUMNI FOR Philippine Development (PCAFPD) celebrated recently its 25th anniversary.

The event coincided with the 47th anniversary of the Peace Corps in the Philippines.

To mark the occasion, PCAFPD signed scholarship agreements with the University of the Philippines at Los Baños (UPLB) and St. Bridget College in Batangas City.

Sandra Swanepoel, Peace Corps country director Philippines, attended the event.

PCAFPD was established by Peace Corps volunteers who had worked in this country to continue their support for Philippine development. With an direct link to the United States government's Peace Corps, it is supported entirely by contributions from former volunteers.

The group gives scholarships to deserving Filipino students who want to go to college. More than 130 scholars have so far completed their studies. Currently some 40 students receive support from PCAFPD.

PCAFPD has supported six scholars at UPLB, with three of them having graduated—Mercy Cleffo, Rica Arcing, and Aristotle Aviso Bartolome. The current scholars are Gina Lopez and Christian Rose and Andrew Esperanchi. One scholar at St. Bridget scholar, Myla Dizon, has also graduated. Thailand de Jesus is PCAFPD vice president for Philippine operations while Nanci S. Smoot is vice president for institutional relations.

For information about PCAFPD, visit http://pcafphilippines.org.

DERANGKONGUIT (second from left) with Gori Maldoza Kangbad, Grace, Dr. Myrna G. Carandang, Dr. Virginia R. Cardenas Ph.D. (standing) and Dr. Ma. Asuncion A. Bartolome and six Jones

FILIPINO STUDENTS VIE FOR PRAWARD

University of Asia and the Pacific students Ngaiste Marie Abrigo and Vincer Randolph Cruz (standing) with Jones (left) were finalists in the Asia Pacific PR Student of the Year Awards sponsored by Weber Shandwick Worldwide. Also in photo are Luigi Amancio, Yvonne Policarpio, Mike Toledo and Jojo Feliciano.

PERPETUAL'S RESERVISTS

Reservist faculty and staff members of the College of Nursing of the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta do the signature roll call over Clark Pilipinas, 03-06, of the 1st Ready Reserve Airlift and Tactical Support Wing (RIATSW) during their Military Orientation Training (MOT) at the Air Force City in Clark Field, Pampanga.

Mirian joins campaign against cluster bombs

THE CENTER FOR PEACE Education (CPE) at Miriam College held recently an exhibit showing the consequences of cluster munitions to coincide with the launch of the Philippine Campaign against Cluster Munitions (PCCM). CPE organized the group with gun control and antilandmine advocates Philippine Action Network and Small Arms Pilipinas) and the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL) to push the campaign against cluster munitions. CPE program assistant and PCCM coordinator Jazmelyn Iglesias during the opening of the exhibit. Cluster munitions or cluster bombs are weapons made of multiple explosive submunitions or bomblets dispersed from a container that opens in mid-air after being deployed from an aircraft. These weapons become duds to landmines that pose a threat even after the end of armed conflicts. The International Cluster Munitions Coalition is working for the signing of a treaty by December.

PCCM's Jazmelyn Uy

TIP Quezon City's new building was blessed recently

TIP now building blessed

THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE of the Philippines freshmen building in the Quezon City campus was blessed recently. The blessing coincided with the commemoration of the ninth anniversary of the school's Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Chapel. Rev. Fr. Arnold M. Abelardo, C.M.F., officiated. The four-story edifice has 36 classrooms, four drafting rooms, two instructional technology rooms and a speech laboratory. It also has seminar and service rooms, faculty lounge, and offices and faculty rooms for the College of Education and the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Humanities and Social Sciences Department and the Mathematics and Physics Department.

UE hosts national counselors' workshop

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST, through its Guidance Counseling Office, will host the Special National Workshop for guidance counselors Jan. 13-14. Conducted by the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association, Inc. (PGCAI), the workshop will have plenary sessions at the UE Manila Conference Hall. Workshop proper will be at the UE College of Law classrooms. Theme of the workshop is "The Professional Counselor: Skills, Rights and Responsibilities." UE president Edilberto A. Garcia invites the guests of honor. She will also invite private participants on behalf of the university on opening day Jan. 13. For more information, call the PGCAI secretariat at 4555-608, 5251000 and 8241-10, or log on to www.pcgcai.ph.

TA-ASAN QUINTO

CEU student journalists attend youth conferences

CENTRO ESCOLAR University journalists students Kenneth Ta-asan and Edward Jay Quinto participated recently in two conferences. Ta-asan, university Student Council president, attended the 1st Southeast and South Asia and Taiwan Innovations (SSATI) Youth Forum on the theme "Global Economy Challenges" at the National Chang Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan, with CEU executive vice president Dr. Rolando F. de Leon. Solemn council president Quinto represented CEU to the 7th National Youth Parliament (NYP) at the Development Academy of the Philippines in Tagaytay City. This year's theme of the biennial conference was "Unity in Diversity: An International and Inclusive Faith Parliament."

PNU marks human rights day

THE PHILIPPINE NORMAL University (PNU) and United Nations Association of the Philippines (UNAP) marked International Human Rights Day with a three-day protest exhibit on "Right to Peace, Education and Food" at the PNU Library lobby. UNAP president and former Commissioner on Human Rights chair Judge Aurora M. Bonifacio cut the ceremonial ribbon formally opening the exhibit. She was assisted by Dr. Evangeline L. Martinez, dean, PNU Social Science Department; Angelo Marasigan, UNAP-NCR president; professor Rene C. Romero; and UNAP director Dr. Felina S. Florendo. A demo teach on Bed Prediction in Teaching Human Rights was conducted later.

JUDGE Aurora M. Bonifacio officially opens the PNU poster exhibit.

TIP now building blessed

THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE of the Philippines freshmen building in the Quezon City campus was blessed recently. The blessing coincided with the commemoration of the ninth anniversary of the school's Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Chapel. Rev. Fr. Arnold M. Abelardo, C.M.F., officiated. The four-story edifice has 36 classrooms, four drafting rooms, two instructional technology rooms and a speech laboratory. It also has seminar and service rooms, faculty lounge, and offices and faculty rooms for the College of Education and the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Humanities and Social Sciences Department and the Mathematics and Physics Department.

Red Cross to strengthen first aid program in schools

THE PHILIPPINE National Red Cross (PNRC) and the Department of Education (DepEd) are promoting first aid programs in public elementary and secondary schools nationwide for the health and safety of students.

PNRC chair and chief executive officer Sen. Richard J. Gordon said public elementary and high school teachers need be equipped with first aid skills and knowledge to protect students.

The PNRC will work with DepEd to ensure that all teachers take a course on first aid. Gordon said President Macapagal-Arroyo wanted first aid included in the school curriculum.

The PNRC said the La Union Red Cross chapter already started training teachers in coordination with the local DepEd office.

Gordon stressed it was important to have a trained person who could give first aid in every home, school and community, so more lives might be saved.

The PNRC chair said he instructed recently first aid training instructors in charge Apple Mharis C. dela Cruz, RN, said 168 students, teachers and civic leaders from various schools, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and government organizations (GOs) participated.

The United Methodist Elementary School topped the elementary level quiz bee. Santiago East Central ES and Malolos ES placed first and second, respectively.

In the high school division, Santiago City National HS (SCNHS) was declared champion. Dr. Vicente National High School and SCNHS Annex were first and second runners up, respectively.

In the first aid competition, University of La Salette Red Cross Youth Council (ULS-RCYC) topped the college division. Southern Isabela College of Arts and Trade (SICAT) and Northwestern College (NC) were second and third, respectively.

In the high school division, Santiago City National HS (SCNHS) was declared champion. Dr. Vicente National High School and SCNHS Annex were first and second runners up. United Methodist, ULS-Grade School, and Malolos ES were first, second, and third, respectively, in the elementary division.

Santiago City's Department of Public Order and Safety (DPOS) topped the ISD and NSCD division. Santiago North Athletic Association (SNAA) and De Vera Medical Direwere first and second runners up.

Playgrounds for the Mind

EUREKA! *Gemma N. Lee-Chua*

Saving with Private Iris... and learning too

MEET PRIVATE Iris, the smartest kid in school.

She knows mathematics, science, history and, best of all, she has a knack for saving pesos.

A techie with a twist (of pigtails), Iris is the redundant friend, though she is more outspoken than most. A loner, she prefers to hide in the utmost headquarters under the closest mini bar home. She hates classmates who cheat and, through observation and deduction, she catches most of them cheating their Iris. Often, she seems to know more than her teacher, which does not endear her to them, too.

Enemy Cord to Iris' only friend and, on the surface, her exact opposite. Hazel, sweet, athletic, and popular, Cord is a bit of a klutz. A basketball star, he has many friends but Iris has been special to him, ever since she helped him tremendously in The Case of the Cauldron Caper.

Loyal and generous, Hazel cannot offer students to see Iris' good traits. One way to do this is to have her help them solve their problems. Iris does not particularly care for the other but if Dunton Elite thinks, then they must be worth helping.

Science mysteries

Iris and Operon are the main characters of the comic series "Private Iris," conceived as elementary and high school encounters. Launched last year by Blast Core, the series aims to educate kids while serving as a form of fun.

Each issue focuses on a clever mystery story. I like the fact that the writer, Jamie Fenarun, does not talk down to kids, and each mystery contains genuine science facts and information in other areas.

For instance, in "The Spirit of the Shroud-eer," mysterious messages appear and disappear on walls of the laboratory. Are these ghosts? Not quite. It turns out that the villains used invisible ink from lemon juice. Heat makes the messages reappear.

Since science is better learned by doing, I find it helpful that there is a follow-up mini-experiment after the story. Dip a brush in simple lemon juice and write with it. When the juice dries up, the message disappears. When you put the paper near a lit candle (not too close or the paper will burn), the juice will react with the heat. The areas with the writing turn brown and the message reappears, like magic.

Another piece of trivia: In the classroom, Iris is troubled by her science teacher for saying that not all rocks are born from fire. Actually, there is "three-ish." Well, our ordinary garden variety rock, not pumice from Mayon. Why? A volcanic rock, pumice has many holes, making it less dense than water. Ergo, it floats!

Interestingly, pumice is used to make soaps with scrubbed hands. It is responsible for the boiled look.

Finance 101

What makes this series not merely educational but practical are the finance lessons embedded in each story. For example, in the story mentioned, a former lab assistant to the inventor of the mistaken Piscibot thief Dunton, the basketball player, calls "the astronomic instrumentation in all announcements" He (and all students, except Iris) just had to have them.

Perfectly normal, right? Sadly, he gets. Hazel has an iconic self-esteem issue with his parents' branded sneakers—but Iris find they have to get—until it's new model comes along. To parents who dispute over-the-dial, don't spending habits, send this message to your kids:

"Don't buy something just because it's a fad. When something is popular only for a short time, it's called a fad. Most of us can not, when something is a fad, everybody seems to want to have or do it. But after a while, the fad dies down and people move on to something else that is newer and more exciting. Fads are just wants, short-time wants. If you are trying to figure out whether some thing you are about to buy is important, ask yourself: do you really need it right now, or do you just want it because others people seem to want it? If you feel the things is just a fad, save your money. You'll be glad later on when the fad dies down and nobody (including you) wants it anymore."

Another reminder is on budgeting, in terms kids can understand and respond to: "Budget your funds when planning an event. If you have a special event that you're planning, like a birthday party or a school event, you will only have a set amount of money for it. It's wise to make a budget so that you can make sure you have enough money for all the important things. For example, you don't want to spend too much on party decorations only to find out you have no money left to buy food for the party. Like those, all the things you need for the event in order of importance. Then set aside the right amount of money for each from your overall budget. The better you plan your event, the more successful it will be!"

Guaranteed savings

Each issue of Private Iris comes with a Spara code, worth P100. Spara is a "smarter version of the piggy bank." A savings and investment instrument from Pioneer Life, Spara guarantees future savings for children and life insurance when and until they turn 14 years old.

Pioneer Life has been in the country for more than two decades. It is a unit of the Pioneer Group, led by Pioneer Insurance and Surety Corp., with assets close to P7 billion.

Classy and boxing, the series is proudly Philippine-made. Statistics, or doctor du Monde University economist Cielito Habito graduates, has taught English literature and comics theory. The stories are brought to life by the wholesome drawings of artist Arnold Arre, a multi-comic inspiration from the bloody gruesomeness of much adult comics. Arre has received the Grand Prize Award for his graphic novels. He designs for individual and corporate clients. To the Private Iris team, keep it up!

Private Iris is available in selected schools, bookstores, and newsstands. Call 7-0000 or go to www.pioneerinsurance.com or www.blastcore.ph for details.

E-mail bitsandbeads@yahoo.com.

RP's top S&T developments

HERE ARE THE TOP 10 Philippine developments in science and technology for 2008, plus one welcome intervention (introduced from abroad, according to NSTP[Philippine.org]).

Big MAC. The Philippines' first anti-terrorism robot. A bomb-disposal robot made by a team of scientists and engineers from the Mapua Institute of Technology headed by engineer Emil John Jadilla, MAEC (Mechanical - Anti-terrorist Concept) was publicly inducted as the latest "Police Inspector" of the Makati Police Force on Oct. 15.

Assembled out of aluminum, fiberglass and plastic, the two-hour high robot, which runs on a rechargeable battery, can move at speeds of up to 15 kilometers per hour and has cameras with night vision capability. It can maneuvers to use the camera level of the air following a chemical explosion.

Hydrogen-powered car created by Daniel Dingal. With an engine filled with ordinary water, Dingal's car suggests a solution to the oil crisis. The 12-volt car battery under the hood of his Toyota Corolla provides the electricity to run and ordinary tire hydrogen and oxygen, like a mini hydrogen generator. Marginal claims that this is impossible, but his seven inventors have recently taken interest in the inventors, which Dingal conceptualized nearly 40 years ago.

Hydrogen-fuelled autoignition device by Robert Gelo. The 74-year-old inventor from Marikina City invented the hydrogen-fuel to reduce pollution from exhaust emissions, but found that it also enhanced the power of the engine and reduced fuel consumption by 30-50 percent. Gelo's device can be distributed only tokens has pollution but sold some 6.5 percent to 7.6 percent targets to the oil.

Star-eyed species discovered by Dr. Edgardo Gomez. In the waters of the Babuyan Islands, in Cagayan, Dr. Edgardo Gomez, marine biologist and professor emeritus at the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute, observed that there were 36 coral species per square meter. It is likely that there are new species, given that the Philippines is known to have the greatest diversity of corals in the world, although its coral reefs are at risk.

RP programs featured in Science magazine. In the story "Philippines Plans Its Search Revival" which appeared in the US Science magazine's December 2008 issue, Dennis Normile wrote about how the Philippines was establishing effective scientific research and development programs through teamwork between government agencies and the science and engineering industries.

Given special focus was the Congressional Committee on Science and Technology and Engineering (COMSTE), a division of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Also given importance in the article was the DOST's "Balik Scientist" program, which attempts to persuade Filipino scientists and engineers now based abroad to return to the Philippines by offering them lucrative positions in science and technology sectors.

Filipino students are given access to free software. Under its Deventipeh program, Microsoft is offering free software to about 8,000 Philippine college students from the Jose Philippine Computer Society (JPCS) to aid the students in developing their own software. Students will enjoy the use of new Microsoft development and designer tools, including the Visual Studio 2008 professional edition, the XNA Game Studio 2.0, and the Expression Studio and the database software developer tools SQL Server 2005 Developer Edition and Windows Server Standard Edition. Not only will they be able to download 180-plus programs free of charge, they will also have access to live online training direct from Microsoft.

Pinoy kids win Robot Olympiad edge at the World Robot Olympiad in Tokyo, Japan. In November, Grace Christine Elementary School students Joseph Adrian Chua, Mitch Ikaia Chua, and Dominique Hannah Ig became the first Filipinos to win a medal in the open category in the elementary level at the Olympiad. Their entry, "Green Wise Community and the C-Tech Robot Engineering a Better World," consisted of 12 robots that performed a number of tasks which helped in saving the environment.

Electric jeepneys used in Makati City to cooperation with: DREPP (Green Renewable Independent Power Producer) and Convergence, the Makati City government has begun using jeepneys powered by electricity. Created by the Philippine renewable energy source firm Solar Electric Co., the jeepneys run on 12 batteries, each requiring eight hours of charging. Each jeepney can carry 16 people and can be at least 100 kilometers daily at 40 kilometers per hour. The vehicles were assembled locally by PhilV Inc., the business arm of the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (MVPMAP). They underwent pilot-testing for a year and are now being fielded in the Ayala Triangle Transportation Office (TTO). The jeepneys can be charged using a component that utilizes biodegradable wastes from Makati City's food outlets and wet markets to generate electricity.

Cancer tracker named RP-DOST's "best project." Cedo Tinsio Fushal E Concepcion's study that explores how green fluorescent protein from certain sea life could be used to track the growth of cancer cells in the human body won Best Project of the Year in the 2008 RP-DOST Business America Category in a graduating BS Molecular Biology and Biotechnology student at the University of the Philippines.

Underwater robot wins top award in BOST contest. The top award in the National Aquatic Technology Competition and Marketplace (AUTOME) was given to an underwater robot constructed by Philippine engineers. Operated by remote control, the robot can perform underwater engineering tasks and relay real-time video footage to its human controller on a boat. This has potential for use in monitoring coral reefs and inspecting underbellies of oil rigs and ships, underwater pipelines, dams, dikes, water tanks, vessels, and reservoirs for potential risk or damage.

In charge available in the Philippines. In a country with about 50 million cell phone users, first technology and public service is more welcome. Equipped with LED screens showing arrival and departure times, the machines allow recharging of all types of mobile phones. They can be found at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 at Metropole Star mall and Alabang Town Center.

REPRESENTATIVE Lim (left) reads the message of former President Ramos. Watson (right) view WWII photos.

Glory days of Filipino . . .

From page B1

A VETERAN slowly makes his way to his seat (and dignitaries.

MAKATI'S jeepney

A WWII PLANE with blown tires is a major attraction at the display.

What I've Learned

The arts have to play a more meaningful role in society

Nicolor O. Jordy
CCP Insider

MANY PEOPLE think that being president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines is all fun, prestige and glamour. Yes, there are the gala concerts, social events, foreign trips and formal dinners you get invited to all the time. And yes, you get to mingle and mix with society's elite, top research local and foreign artists and the cultural. But that's only way among the many facets of the job of running the country's biggest arts institution.

When I was a dancer of the Ballet Philippines, the resident dance company of the CCP, I used to be awed by the prestige and power that went with the position of CCP president, then occupied by Ms. Imelda Lacuesta Reading. While she was an outstanding artist and a charming person, she was a sort of feared by as most creatives in the CCP basement, for she wielded the power to determine our future as a company and as individual artists. Little did I know that one day I would be sitting in the very same chair that once caused me and budding artists in the very same room where we would sweat more because of fear of being chastised for some misdemeanor or other.

Here that I've held the post for seven years years. I can only marvel at the ballet of how I've been able to lead the organization for so long a period. There were some bumps along the way but, generally, I can say that the road has been pretty smooth. I guess there are things that I've learned along the way that helped me through these years.

The arts should be relevant to the lives of Filipinos.

Artists don't make it to old and last by purpose. However, in this day and age when many artists and arts organizations are fighting for survival, the arts have to play a more meaningful role in our society so that we'll continue to enjoy public support and support. Values education reflect these, more entertainment should be given focus by our artists when they plan or promoting family unity, love of country, humanity, respect for elders, caring for the environment and preservation of our cultural heritage. The arts, as a creative industry, should also be solidly partnered by our arts and cultural managers for it will provide the much-needed viability and sustainability that all of us in the arts sector have been longing for. Indeed, the arts have the power to transform our lives, our communities and our environment into what we dream them to be.

There is never a dearth of Filipino talent.

In my frequent travels all over the country, I have never ceased to be amazed by the artistic talents of Filipinos.—at street dance festivals of the Sinulog or Dinagyang, modern dance competitions in Davao and at the MUTI Body Festival, the annual CCP Philippine Arts Festival, the SM/BCDA transportation, the production festivals of the Philippine High School for the Arts or the annual Virgin Labfest and Dance Analysis. There is always new talent to discover and nurture.

You're only as good as your last project.

In the artistic world, artistic excellence is paramount. One has to strive to be better all the time. Public and personal expectations dictate that your next show or exhibition should at least equal or be better than the last one. Failure to do so will lose people away and spoil the dreams of your supporters.

It helps to know as many aspects of your organization's work as possible.

My background as a former dancer, dance teacher, television assistant, company manager, stage manager, production manager and stage director helped me a lot to understand the nature of the CCP's work, but I've had to learn many other things that go with managing a large government institution—government bureaucracy, accounting procedures, fundraising, public and media relations, personnel, management principles, etc. I've been a hands-on type of manager all my professional life so I tend to get involved in all the aspects of CCP work, including maintenance, traffic management, security and CCP Complex land development.

In the arts, teamwork is essential.

I've been privileged to serve under a governing board composed of people with integrity, wisdom and strength of character. Similarly, I have been fortunate to have as part of the CCP staff some of the most talented and artist-managers in the country. I would like to attribute the success of many CCP artistic programs to them. However, teamwork has to start with me to spell the success or of organizations. They have to work harmoniously together or not love what they're doing. In the end, my work is to keep the CCP staff challenged with new programs, motivated through benefits and recognition, and trained through various human resources development programs.

There are still many charitable people who are willing to support the arts.

You need only to know how to look for them and get their support. I am surprised to discover that many society personalities, civic leaders, members of the media, businessmen and government officials are avowed believers in the arts. These are people who know the value of arts in our society and are willing to do something to support it. The CCP has been fortunate to be a beneficiary of this support and you can get many people like Betty Elenson, Imelda Cojuangco, Ben Zobel, Antonio Cojuangco and organizations like the Johnson Memorial Foundation, Inc. and Rotary Club of Manila to support our programs.

Agreement

Instruct the class to read the responses and bring to class stories about the environment. Students should underline phrases or sentences of figurative language.

Power does not come with the position—one earns it.

Wielding power by virtue of one's title is pointless to get things done or to influence the state of things does not always work. You have to earn the respect of your subordinates and persuade them to follow their will willingly and wholeheartedly. Follow your leaders and commit themselves to the larger vision.

Be patient.

Patience is what I've learned most in my work. To those aspiring to be future CCP presidents, you have to learn to be patient in dealing with other government red tape and bureaucracy. You must be patient with artists, some of who have gargantuan egos but great contributions to make, and with boards that are mandated to file eight years. You should always be patient with your public, and must be circumspect with people who choose to be difficult. You need to have perseverance in raising funds that you'll get turned down quite often. You need a lot of patience in teaching all these necessities, which is not in-born but must be learned. You must love with dedication and commitment to your work and to the larger cause of your organization.

To sum this respect, you must pause to share that you understand your job, that you work harder than them and that you do not ask for personal benefit but for the good of the organization.

alma matter

Where Nicolor Jordy went to school

Elementary—Lorenzo Elementary School
High school—Philippine Science High School
College—B.S. Zoology, UP Diliman
Course—CCP Dance School (Graduate/postgrad Arts Management (Development Program, Ateneo School of Management, Canada Arts Management)

INQUIRER IN EDUCATION

IIE LESSON PLAN CONTEST DECEMBER WINNER

Nature speaks

This INTERMEDIATE LESSON PLAN for high school English, written and edited by Jennifer B. Dilquinia, is good for two reasons. It should be given after the development of the figurative language concept. Ms. Dilquinia teaches English and theater arts at the Cagayan National High School in Tuguegarao City.

Objectives

Students will be able to listen to and carry out instructions correctly; use figurative language in narrating stories and write poems.

Materials

Music CDs, CD player, pictures clipped from the favorite issues of Jan. 14, Feb. 3, 10, 17 and 24 and April 20 and 27, 2008 Pr. Jerry Orbos' April 6, 2008 column in Inquirer

Procedure

A. Motivation

Use Suggestopedia to arouse the students' interest, using quotations from Fr. Jerry Orbos' column in the Inquirer, while recordings of sounds of nature are played in the background.

Close your eyes. Free yourself from any distractions. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Listen to these questions and reflect upon them.

When was the last time you actually listened to what is around you?

When was the last time you observed nature itself to unfold and celebrate you?

When was the last time you allowed yourself to be amazed by a stellar sunset or beautiful shore?

B. Lesson proper

1. Show pictures from the favorite front page.

2. Ask the student what the pictures show. (Use open question). The pictures show the magnificent beauty of nature. they show the delectable relationship between man and nature.)

3. Present the questions to the motivation portions. "When was the last time you allowed the itself to speak to you?"

Instruct the students to look at the pictures in session and ask what stories do they think are behind the pictures.

To enhance the understanding of the lessons regarding the concept of allowing life to speak to them, use the Picture Talk and Collaborative Learning (PTCL) strategy.

After using the strategy, ask the class, "Which of the stories presented closely achieved the objective?"

2. Ask the students when was the last time they allowed nature to enfold and celebrate them.

To further appreciate the significance of nature in life, conduct "The Tree" activity. **(Use based Due activity)**

After "The Tree" activity, ask these questions:

"How did you feel while performing the activity?"

"How did you feel after doing the activity?"

"Do you feel relaxed, like totally cradled in the bosom of a loving mother?"

"Do you feel rejuvenated, like a once feuding life songs after drinking water?"

Why do you think this activity is entitled 'The Tree'?"

Engagement activity

Tell the class to look at the picture of a sunset in the issues of Jan. 14, 2008.

Instruct the students to write a simple poem following the author's below to express their feelings/ideas in the sunset, with emphasis on using figures of speech.

Enrichment activities

1. Collage making—Using their collection of pictures from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, tell the class to make a collage to answer this challenge: How can you help Nature sing its glory till eternity?

2. Dance drama — Ask the students to choreograph/do a dance drama with the theme "Nature Nurtures."

B. Activity No. 1

Picture talk and collaborative learning (PTCL) strategy

Instructions:
1. Divide the students into seven groups.
2. Each group has to arrange a suggestion.
3. Each group need a image/the pictures according to their preference.
4. Based on the pictures, each group must create a story using figures of speech.
5. Representatives must report the group output after 10 minutes.

Rubrics:
Content 25%
Organization 25%
Originality 15%
Accuracy 15%
Mastery 15%
Team work 50%
Total 100%

B. Activity No. 2: The Tree

Task-based instructions and total physical responses strategy

Task control: We can a tree exercise here. Sometimes, a little confrontation of the wind, a few thorns gracefully as its crown sways gently. Watching it wave majestically like a queen/calm one of peace with tranquil, with nature and most especially with his/her Creator.

Task: To follow instructions
Meditative music to played while the class participate in the activity.)

Task instructions:
1. Put your eyes on a distant point.
2. Raise your right foot, grasping ankle with your right hand.
3. Place the right foot as high as possible. Sway the leg as the tree left thigh muscle.
4. Place both arms at the sides.
5. Inhale ... exhale ... inhale ... exhale
6. Raise arms slowly forming a mid-arc, until they meet over your head, palm to palm.
7. Extend arms fully above head, palms touching.
8. Slowly bring arms down vertically, palms together, near the face on
9. Body reach the direct just like in prayer.

JAN. 6, 2008 front page photo of the canvas in the tarpaulin "wallpaper" style of the Inquirer

Feb. 17, 2008

April 6, 2008

April 21, 2008

April 28, 2008